





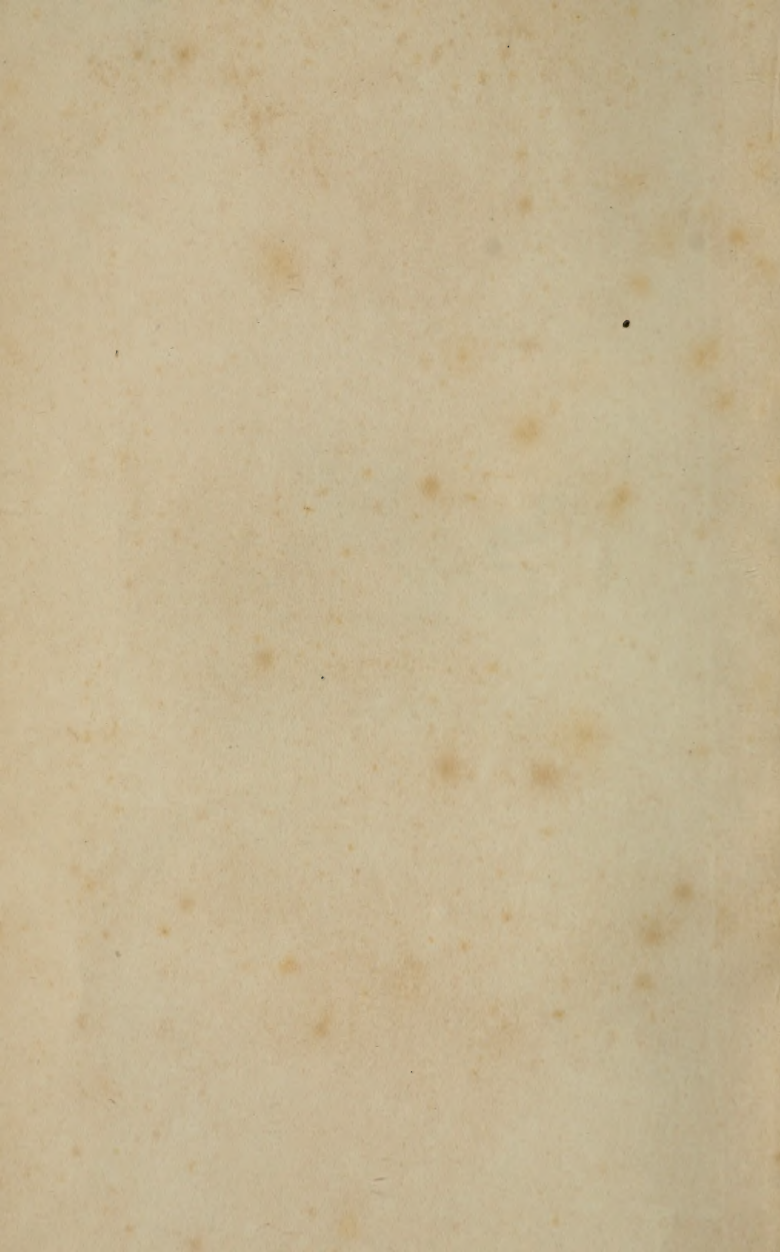
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# SELF-DEPENDANCE.

A NOVEL,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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VOL. III.

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1849.





# SELF-DEPENDANCE

## CHAPTER I.

THE party now reached Sion, the ancient capital of the Valais. The crowded streets, the bustle that reigned everywhere, the busy, cheerful faces, fully testified that this was a day of no common importance; and when they drove up to the hotel, the space in front was thronged with tables and booths, glittering with tempting merchandize, drawing gaping crowds about them.

They amused themselves a short time with gazing from the window on the stirring scene

below, when Charles challenged them to accompany him on a stroll through the town.

Madame declined; but the young friends accepted the invitation, and they set out, accompanied by Werner.

The scene which appeared so striking and picturesque from the window, lost much of its beauty on a nearer approach. The figures and dress of the peasants had little of the romance about them, and many presented the disgusting *goitre*, which they took no pains to conceal. However, civility and good-humour were universal, and they threaded their way through the crowd, themselves the object of curiosity as they passed along.

The town itself, seated near the Rhone, excited more than common interest, being partly built upon two isolated rocks, rising boldly from the valley, their sides clothed with streets, and their summits crowned with fortresses. They wandered on till they left the town, and its busy throngs behind them, and reached a retired spot, where a knot of gipsies had taken up their temporary abode. Two or three half-naked, yet pretty children, were rolling on the grass before the tent, and the party stopped to observe them. A good-looking female, who had

stood at the entrance watching them, now came forward, and, with the ready tact of their tribe, professed her readiness to tell their fortunes for a piece of silver.

Few females can resist the impulse to listen to such a call, but when his fair companions would have shrunk from the invitation, Charles laughingly told them, it might be a work of charity to comply, at all events, they might extract some amusement from the attempted exertion of such wondrous knowledge. Induced, by his solicitations, Matilda gave the purchase fee, and presented her palm.

The female examined it steadfastly for some time, then her dark eyes flashed as she spoke.

“The sun rises bright, a black cloud comes over it, blacker, blacker, blacker, woes beset thee, thy love is wretchedness; an enemy that slumbers not, seeks thy life.”

Matilda, appalled, would have withdrawn her hand.

“Yet one moment, beautiful lady;” and her eye still dwelt upon the open palm. “I see a change; there is a struggling gleam of light—on—on—I mark it spread till it reaches the other hemisphere. You are no murderess, lady, yet the death-blow that strikes the guilty

one, comes from thine own hand. I see the red spot. Start not, Lady, for heaven will approve the deed."

It was over.

The gipsey retired within the tent. Matilda grew faint.

"What means this, Charles? Quick, lead me away."

Charles supported her, and she gradually recovered herself, as they approached the hotel.

"What means this, Charles? Is it a dream?"

"No dream, dear Matilda; but a reality which we all witnessed. I will, however, return, and question the gipsey."

He would have avoided the mention of it to Madame; but after the caution he had received from her on a similar occasion, he did not hesitate to acquaint her with the very singular event.

"Charles, I am one, on whom predictions of this nature, however startling, make no permanent impression. The power of prophecy is beyond the reach of mortal agency. Her predictions, though bearing so strongly, and so truly on actual events, will, I doubt not, be capable of an easy solution. She must have



had some previous knowledge of Matilda's history. But where is Dennis? He may, probably, thro' some light upon it."

Dennis had not accompanied Charles, being left behind, in case Madame should require his services, but she had released him from his attendance, and, in company with Mary, he had followed the party with an intent to overtake them. He slowly tracked them from place to place, till he reached, at length, the retired spot, where the adventure had taken place. He was familiar with gipsies, and their abode, and observing the woman in front of the tent,

"By the powers, Mary, there's an old acquaintance."

"What, that strange gipsey there? Come away, Dennis, I am sick of gipsies."

"But this is one of the better end of them, Mary. She never harmed man, woman, or child."

"Fanchon," he said, approaching her, "this is a queer meeting any how."

Fanchon smiled upon him; and even Mary was struck with the sweet expression of her features.

"When we last met in England, I was a bit of a tramp like yourself, Fanchon. I shall

not forget your kindness in a hurry, when that quarrelsome Mike, bad luck to him, cut me so bad with his reaping hook. You and your husband gave me board and lodging in your nice clean tent; and it was your own kind heart that nursed me, and made me sound again. You knew I had not a rap in my pocket; but it was all one to you, Fanchon; and Dennis is not the man to forget it. But where's your husband?"

"He's just gone into the town," replied Fanchon, "to buy us a few necessaries; but I've been looking out for you, Dennis."

"For me, Fanchon; that's mighty odd. How could you dream of my being here?"

"I've heard a good deal about you, Dennis, since we parted. We ourselves left England shortly after, and have wandered to these parts, where we frequently fall in with some of our tribe, and acquaint each other with the adventures we have met with. One day we were joined, in France, by an acquaintance, who, though young in years, was an adept in all kinds of roguery. I never liked him; but he was amusing, and seemed proud of reciting proofs of his own ingenuity, as he termed his dishonest practices. His travelling name

was Balfour, and his manners and appearance would pass current in any society. He had long been in the pay of some Count, a gambler and of desperate character, of whom he delighted to talk, giving sketches of every member of his household, among the rest yourself, Dennis. When he first mentioned the name and described you as a simple Irishman that the Count's wife had picked up in her English rambles, I made more particular enquiries, and from his description was soon satisfied it was yourself. He said you were a very useful personage, Dennis, easily imposed upon, in fact a silly, gullible fellow, whose simple credulity the Count worked upon for his own ends, so that Dennis believed everything he told him and was ready for any dirty work."

"And no thanks to him, any how," interposed Dennis, evidently mortified.

"He told us," continued the gipsey, "that he was then on his road to Geneva, where the Count had previously started in company with Dennis, bent on the murder of an elderly lady living there, except she willingly abandoned the possession of a large property, which had been bequeathed to her to his utter

exclusion, by his own brother, on account of his abandoned conduct, 'The Count is a generous fellow,' he said, 'and pays like a prince when luck's on his side, but very often, and at this moment, he has scarce a sou in his pocket, so that this old lady's money will come in seasonably.' When I told Balfour such a desperate game would recoil on their own heads, he only laughed at my scruples, and bade me listen to one of their English adventures, which crowned all. The Count insinuated himself into an intimacy with a wealthy youth in London, who at times lost large sums to him, but the tide chanced one night to turn against the Count. He grew desperate, staked heavier sums till he was completely beggared. His friend, with perfect indifference, collected all his winnings and left the gaming house, leaving the Count grinding his teeth with rage and disappointment. He followed him with a confederate, overtook and murdered him. He was in the act of plundering him when a man suddenly rushed upon him in the dark, and a pistol shot slightly wounded him. He took to his heels in alarm, and lost not a moment in quitting England, waiting the result of the adventure



in Paris. It seemed that the party who surprised us in the act of robbing the body, was the intimate friend of the murdered wretch, whom he had cautioned against this dangerous intimacy with the Count, and was actually in search of him at the time of the murder. He was surprised by the police, examining the dead body, apprehended as the murderer, the discharged pistol found upon him, and other suspicious circumstances were so strong against him, that on his trial he was found guilty, and left for execution. Powerful intercession was made in his favour, and the sentence changed to transportation for life. It was a lucky escape for us, Fanchon, was it not?"

"“Lucky do you say!” I cried, with a shudder. ‘The curse of Heaven and of all good men will pursue you.’

“He only laughed.

““But I have not told you all, Fanchon—hear the rest. This unlucky fellow who is now suffering the penalty of another man’s guilt, was attached to one of the prettiest girls in London. Judge of her agony, she was heart-broken, yet she survived the parting, and with a spirit which I cannot but admire, has devoted her life to her lover’s cause; vowing never to

rest till she had established his innocence, and discovered the real murderer. She will have enough to do, Fanchon. We only laugh at her threats.'

"This dreadful tale haunted me night and day—it never left me. I would have delivered Balfour up to justice; but it was transgressing the settled custom with our tribe, never to betray or inform against one another. We moved slowly southward, and at length reached the neighbourhood of Berne, where we proposed halting a few days in one of our favourite haunts. Again I was surprised by the appearance of Balfour; but his former buoyancy of spirits seemed to have deserted him. He said he was come to Berne, where he had arranged to meet the Count's wife, in order to conduct her to Florence.

"'But where's the Count?' I asked; 'and where is Dennis?'

"'You shall know all, Fanchon. When I reached Geneva, I found them in high spirits, for everything promised success. A female confederate was already engaged in the lady's household, and Pierre, her favourite servant, was also in our pay. By their means we were, at midnight, introduced into the house, and

Dennis, excited to the deed by the artful representations of his master, attempted the murder of the lady, as she slept in her chamber. Dennis was a bungler in such matters, and the attempt failed. We were for the time obliged to decamp, lurking, however, about, and in nightly communication with Pierre, who in one of his stealthy visits, told us that some English friends had arrived at the house of his mistress, among whom was the identical pretty girl whose lover had been so lately convicted and sentenced to transportation for life, for a crime of which he was wholly innocent. Her avowed object was the pursuit and capture of the Count, the real murderer, whom she had, with most patient and persevering tact, traced through his London haunts, and ascertaining his flight from England, had arrived at Geneva with the devoted purpose to sacrifice even her existence to the exclusive object of discovering and dragging forth the murderer to justice, and establishing the innocence of her injured lover. She was accompanied by a young man—a silly, hot-brained relative, who backed her in all her crude notions, and the Count laughed at the farcical attempts of two such children to enter

the lists with so experienced an antagonist as himself.

“‘But I have them now,’ he joyfully, exclaimed, ‘just as I could wish, all collected together, and the same blow shall crush them all.’

“That faithful fellow Pierre now advised us that his mistress, with her visitors, proposed an excursion to Vevay, where they intended remaining during the night, and the Count, with a desperate determination, swore that some of the party should never return to Geneva alive. Dennis, who was equally excited, and eager to make amends for his last failure, received his lesson, and armed for the purpose, followed the carriage in disguise. At Vevay we prowled about, watching their movements. Night came on, the public walk was deserted, but still we lurked there. At length, we distinctly heard footsteps.

“‘They come,’ I whispered Dennis. ‘The romantic English girl and her boasting relation. They are alone, and in our power.’

“I was determined the opportunity should not pass. There would be no witnesses to the murder: the lake was close by to hide the



bodies. Dennis rushed forward from our hiding-place; but at the unexpected sight of two strangers, who stopped to notice him, he hurried back, and we concealed ourselves deeper in the shade. I told Dennis to remain quietly there, while I went to acquaint the Count, whom I had left not far off with Pierre, that even yet, in spite of the interruption, the job should be done. I returned to Dennis, his place was empty—where could he be? I heard his voice, and to my astonishment, he was in conversation with the strangers. I listened; the Irish fool had turned traitor—he was explaining the intended plot. I was maddened at his conduct, and the rustling that I made roused their suspicions. With difficulty I escaped, as I heard them at my heels. This was a woeful downfall to our hopes. The Count raved like a demon; Dennis would reveal all, and our safety would be compromised by remaining longer at Vevay, nor was the Count's fury lessened by the hints which Pierre threw out, that boy as he was, they had a formidable opponent in the English youth, whom he called Charles, whose fearless energy and activity would not be easily baffled.

“ ‘Dennis must die,’ cried the Count; ‘his

foul tongue must be silenced ; and he shall be the first victim.'

"Pierre seemed paralyzed with terror at the awful crisis in which he had involved himself. His mistress's doors were now for ever closed against him ; he dare not return, and I suspected that he envied Dennis, who had already made his peace with the opposite party, and was now exempt from those harassing fears ever attendant on a life of guilt.

" ' Balfour,' I said, ' such are not the remarks of one hardened in sin. They are like the wavering of a disturbed conscience.'

"Well, well," he replied, thoughtfully, "it may be so, but I am too fast in the mire, I cannot free myself, it is too late."

"Is there blood upon your conscience, Balfour?"

"Never, but I have witnessed the shedding of it. Even as regards the London murder, the Count himself struck the blow. I deemed that robbery only was his object, not murder. I am sick of this mode of life, Fanchon."

"After this confession," said Fanchon, "Balfour left me, and I think he bitterly repents his connexion with the Count, and would

gladly dissolve it. But tell me, Dennis, is his tale a true one?"

"And is it not God's truth," said Dennis, "not a scrap of a lie about it."

"The more the pity," sighed Fanchon, "for it is full of sorrow. It is never out of my thoughts, and scares both sleep and comfort. I made Balfour describe to me these youthful objects of the Count's deadly hatred, and well from his description did I recognise them as they stood before me here not an hour ago."

"Sure you dream, Fanchon."

"No, Dennis; how fair, how innocent she looked, and he so spirited and intelligent! And are such noble beings destined to fall beneath the assassin's blow? Last night I dreamt the crisis of their fate was arrived, the final struggle had commenced, methought this gentle lady, with the fearless bearing of a heroien, was in the midst of the fray. I heard the death-shot ring that laid the Count low at her feet, at the very moment when his dagger's point had reached her bosom. That death-shot was fired by herself! The dream seemed like reality, an earnest of what was to come. It was still present with me, when from my tent

door, I watched the strangers' approach. I proffered to exercise the mystery of my craft, and tell the lady her fortune to which, after some hesitation she assented. My knowledge of her history befriended me, and I pictured her future fate according to my dream. I spoke like one inspired, as I scanned the lines of her hand, and overcome with wonder and awe, she almost sank fainting to the earth. Her companion slowly led her away, and I saw them no more."

"We must follow them to the hotel, Dennis. My mistress will require my aid."

"Fanchon," said Dennis, "I've many puzzling matters to ask about; but you see, we must begone. I will however, tell all these mighty wonders to my master. Have I your leave so to do, Fanchon?"

"Aye, Dennis, it is my earnest wish you should tell him all, and assure him from me that humble as I am, I may yet chance to befriend him. But tell me, Dennis, is that your own Kathleen that clings so closely to you?"

"No, Fanchon, Kathleen, heaven bless her, is far away in the green isle. This is my fel-

low servant, the good lady you saw here, is her mistress."

"Then let her also acquaint her mistress with all she has heard and seen. And now hasten where your duty calls you. We may chance meet again."

It would be difficult to describe the astonishment of his hearers, when Dennis, on reaching the hotel unburthened himself in his own peculiar way, of the strange adventures, so bewildering even to himself. His narrative was so perplexed, that Charles at once appealed to Mary who stood beside him, and who detailed the whole from the first meeting with the gipsy to their final parting, so clearly and accurately that Dennis exclaimed,

"Why there it is, all clean and over again. By the powers, there's not a letter of the alphabet left out, and that's only truth, Mary."

"Mary, dear Mary," said Matilda, "you have taken a load off my heart; what I heard to-day from that wonderful woman, was so strange, that she seemed like an inspired sybil, that read my destiny from the open book of fate; and my intellect reeled as she spoke. But now all is naturally explained, and I feel



that in the gipsy prophetess I have found a friend."

"Indeed, sweet coz." said Charles, "I share your feelings. The explanation comes so unexpectedly on the heels of the mystery, that it is doubly gratifying. Dennis, your acquaintance Balfour, must not be lost sight of. He is no doubt in the Count's secret, and from the symptoms of contrition that escaped him, I augur much. In short, could we win him over, what might we not expect?"

"Fanchon will not be idle, sir," replied Dennis, "but had we not better get to the speech of her again?"

"Well counselled, Dennis; our fate seems linked with Balfour. Methinks the news of Minet's melancholy end will have a salutary effect upon him."

Charles now left them, accompanied by Dennis. The distinction between master and servant was for the moment suspended, as they walked side by side in anxious conversation. They reached the scene of action, but stood in silent astonishment; the gipsy family had disappeared.

"What's in the wind now, Dennis," cried Charles, in amazement.

“And sure, I’m no witch, sir, like Fanchon, or I could tell you all about it.”

They wandered up and down, and Dennis busied himself in searching the holes and crannies in the rock beneath which the tent had stood, so minutely, that his master, at length, noticed it.

“Fanchon seldom does anything by halves,” was Dennis’s reply; “and, by the powers, here’s a proof of it,” he cried, in ecstasy, as he drew forth a bit of paper, which he handed to Charles.

On it, in scarcely legible characters, was the following:—

“When my husband returned from the market, he was alarmed, when I told him what had passed. Our safety might be compromised. In a few minutes all was ready for removal, but where I know not. I will not forget you.”

This communication, though short, was gratifying, as it explained the cause of their hasty departure.

“Well, Dennis, we must be satisfied with

this, and I am well pleased at the closing remark; but what sort of a man is the husband?"

"There may be a spice of good in him; but it's some how hard to get at it, for he seldom speaks. He is, however, fond of Fanchon, and, I think, she's master, but in a nice, clever way of her own, without letting him see it."

"Is it of any use, do you think, Dennis, searching in the neighbourhood, or making enquiries what route they may have taken?"

"Not a bit, sir. This sort of gentry always avoid the frequented road; and in this heathenish country, all ups and downs, they may lie close and snug half a mile from you, and cheat you at last. We must e'en take things as we find 'em, sir; and is it not Fanchon herself that says, in that precious paper, she won't forget us?"

Charles was not disposed to question the good advice of Dennis, and they returned to the hotel, where he made his report of what had passed.

"Well, Charles," said Madame, "as it is generally agreed, that your present failure does not tend to weaken the favorable impression, which the result of Dennis meeting with

the gipsy left on our minds, let us proceed onward with thankful hearts, and reach the comfortable hotel at Brieg this evening. Tomorrow, God willing, we shall cross the Simplon."

Their route still continued along the banks of the Rhone, and as it was essential that the passage over the Simplon should be commenced at an early hour on the morrow, they did not linger on the road.

The dawn broke bright and beautiful, and they all rose with pleasing anticipations of the novelties that awaited them in the day's journey.

Mary and Dennis travelled together as before, and never did Dennis feel so happy and independent as when he took his usual seat by her side. He gave free vent to his thoughts, in the full assurance that he would find in her a patient listener, though Mary, sometimes, found it difficult to avoid wounding his self-love by unseasonable laughter. For some time, Dennis watched their progress in silence.

"Mary," at length he said, "Nature never meant us to ramble from home, and be after bothering our neighbours?"

"Why not, Dennis?"

“What did she mean these mighty big hills for but to keep us from gadding abroad? Why look up there! mercy upon us, as steep as the side of a church, and all frost and ice, shining like my master’s best boots. Why Adam himself could not have planted his foot there, not a christian soul but a bird could manage to get over it.”

“But look, Dennis, what a nice broad road, and among these trees too. It is not steep at all.”

They, at length, left the forest behind them, and the scenery was now of the most terrific character. All was wildness and desolation, yet even here the genius of man had triumphed, and the wondrous road leaped, as it were, over every obstacle, now winding upwards along the brink of the dark abyss; now crossing deep ravines, at intervals displaying its galleries, cut out of solid glaciers of ice, or mighty masses of granite, its picturesque aqueducts and bridges of imposing height and grandeur, casting into shade all the boasted works of antiquity. Here and there a solitary cross attracted the eye, sad memorial of some wretch’s fate, buried beneath the resistless avalanche, which, rushing in thunder from



the snowy precipice above, spared nothing in its headlong course.

“The Lord be good unto us, Mary! Can there be anything on the other side worth this mighty fuss, and the power of money it must have cost, barring all the frights? I wish we were well out of this queer spot, for your sake, Mary.”

“And a little for your own, Dennis; but have you nothing like it in Ireland?”

“Whisht, Mary, by the powers, we should be ashamed of it. Some of our mountain roads are bad enough, and that’s only truth; but then the nice snug whiskey shop, Mary, where you may rest and hear a bit of news.”

“Aye, Dennis,” she said, smiling, “those are luxuries confined to your own country. I suppose I must wait till I get to Ireland for a sight of real wonders; but, in the mean time, Dennis, I must own, I am astonished with all I now see.”

“Mary,” observed Dennis, after a pause, “you have a striking perception of the grand and beautiful in nature.”

“What, Dennis?” cried Mary, startled at his more than usually pompous phraseology.

“Nay, Mary, I but use the same words as your mistress, when I once overheard her talking about you; and when you’ve the luck to visit Ireland, won’t you see there what’s what?”

“And I hope you will be at my side, Dennis, to explain it.”

“And won’t I be with you, Mary, and there will be also the old lady, and your angel of a mistress, and, for the matter of that, your new master too, good luck to him; and there will be Mr. Charles and that pretty Miss Emily—no, by the powers, I’m wrong there.”

“Why, what harm has the poor girl done, Dennis, not to make one of your happy party.”

“Not make one!” cried Dennis; “what could the rest do without her? I meant to say, that by that time she’ll have a gold ring on her finger, and Mr. Charles will put it there, and where will Miss Emily be then, Mary?”

“Aye, Dennis;” and Mary could not suppress a tear. “Heaven speed your happy party. But you have forgot Kathleen, where will she be all the time?”

“And is it where she’ll be, Mary, you want to know? Wont she have enough to do, cook-

ing for all the gentlefolk in the cabin, for my master's so good to me and the ladies, that they say I shall have a snug cabin of my own when I go back to Ireland; and is there any one that shall be more welcome to it than yourself, Mary?"

This was a natural burst of eloquence that came direct from the heart.

It presented an artless picture of such domestic happiness, in which those she loved formed so prominent a part, that Mary was deeply affected by it, nor was her regard for the speaker lessened by the closing mention of herself. She was lost in a pleasing reverie, from which she was roused, by an announcement from the driver, that they were approaching the last tunnel on this side the summit, and which was cut out of the solid ice. On emerging from it, they soon reached the most elevated part of the pass, where the rest of the party had already arrived in safety.

And they walked about this lofty site, in a state of no common excitement. It was the region of loneliness, of desolation, of eternal snow; yet it was not wholly solitary. The ready convent offered within its hospitable

walls, shelter and refreshment to the exhausted traveller, and figures were moving about, prompt to assist, as occasion might require. They had met one gay party of strangers ere they reached the summit, and an English carriage with its cheerful inmates, whose voices broke at intervals over the silence, was just leaving the convent gate, rendering the calm more strikingly dreary, as it disappeared down the descent to Italy. Dense vapours seemed to be gathering round, and gusts of wind at intervals swept by, and as they looked back upon their late route a driving mist gradually obscured the view, till all was covered with a rolling sea of vapour, here and there, however, partially illuminated by the sunshine, giving distinctly through the dusky cloud, glimpses of some bright spot below. Even above this misty curtain that enveloped the sides of the everlasting steeps, many an icy peak stood forth in bold relief from the dark sky beyond, glittering in the sunlight, and as Charles pointed out this feature in the scenery,

“How strikingly,” said Matilda, “it exemplifies Goldsmith’s beautiful description,

As some tall cliff, that rears its awful form,  
Swells from the vale and midway leaves the storm,  
Though round its brows the rolling clouds are  
spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head."

By the advice of Werner they proceeded onwards towards the village of Simplon, where he promised them comfortable quarters, in case the weather forbade farther progress.

As they descended, the scenery appeared to increase in wildness, dimly seen through the floating mist, which magnified every object.

"Before the formation of the present road," said Matilda, "how awful, how dangerous must this pass have been! many a lonely traveller must have disappeared. The robber, the murderer have been busy here."

"Even yet," replied Madame, "there is an excuse for timidity. All are not equally collected in the moment of danger. The first time I crossed the Simplon, it was in company with an English girl of eighteen. She was almost paralyzed with terror at some parts of the pass, and particularly, as we skirted the edge of the gloomy precipices, and scanned the depths below. There was no affectation



in her terror. She clung to me in alarm, and I, with difficulty, preserved her from fainting. A few years afterwards I again crossed these heights with her, but she was now a married woman, with two lovely children, and her husband was anxiously expecting her at Milan. The previous night had been more than usually tempestuous. Never had I known the pass more terrific. The torrents and loosened rocks had fallen from the steeps above, tearing up the road, and sweeping the parapets into the gulphs beneath us, while the violent gusts seemed ready to precipitate our light carriage into the deep abyss, and our situation was rendered more alarming by a black mist that suddenly enveloped us. Yet my companion quailed not. She seemed insensible to fear, on her own account, all her thoughts were centred in her children; and amidst the storm, I heard her cheerful lullaby, as she soothed the youngest to sleep in her bosom."

"Oh, woman, woman," exclaimed Charles, excited at this short sketch, "what should we be without you? From the cradle to the grave, our best, our truest, and, sometimes, our only friend."

This sincere tribute to the holy character

of woman was succeeded by a general silence, as the feelings it roused in his hearers were too deep for words.

“Charles,” at length observed Matilda, “would that we could hear such a sentiment from the lips of Seymour! Your words remind me forcibly of poor Ellen. He may yet discover the truth of them. Yes, the repentant wretch may yet sue to her for forgiveness.”

Suddenly they heard a distant report. They listened in alarm. Again another. The sound leaped from rock to rock, and was shortly succeeded by a shrill whistle.

“That is the note,” said Charles, “of an English dog-whistle; I know it well: and the sounds seem to proceed from pistol shots; but on what account?”

He questioned one of the drivers.

“Do you suspect there’s mischief—any attack upon travellers?”

He could not tell; he had heard his father speak of such doings, but they were rare now. Werner, who sat behind, whispered to Charles, he feared, the carriage which left the convent as they arrived, had been attacked.

Charles started.

“ We must be prepared, Werner.”

They proceeded on the route in watchful silence; and after little more than an hour's continued descent, during which the day had gradually brightened, they reached without farther alarm, the lonely village of Simplon, where they found more comfortable accommodation than its desolate appearance warranted. The place was in a high state of excitement. Some desperate fellows had stopped an English carriage.

Their purpose seemed more than robbery, as, after firing two shots, they forced open the carriage door, and were in the act of dragging forth some of the inmates, when, at the sound of a whistle, from the neighbouring rocks, they suddenly desisted and disappeared. It was scarcely the work of a minute; but the cause of so unusual an outrage, and the actors in it, were altogether unknown.

One of the shots had grazed the arm of the servant; but the party, after some consultation, decided to proceed onwards, and merely remained to change horses.

The adventure was in everybody's mouth, from the parlour to the stable, and gave rise to various surmises according to the fancy of

the speaker, which, however, ended in nothing satisfactory, while probably those, who seemed indifferent about the matter, and only listened to the remarks around them, could more easily have solved the mystery. Among these, were the two postillions, who had driven the English carriage, which was attacked, and were now rubbing down their horses.

Werner, who was ever on the alert, was locking the door of the carriage, as the party purposed dining at Simplon, when his attention was attracted to these two worthies. They seemed to him to be quarrelling.

“If my tongue is not sharp enough,” said one, “you shall have a taste of steel. Equal shares, or you may lose all.”

He overheard no more. His suspicions were roused, and he communicated what he had heard to Charles, who chanced to be coming forth from the inn.

“Werner, what you have now mentioned, tends to confirm some strange thoughts which have fastened upon me. The attack was made upon the wrong carriage.”

Werner mused awhile.

“I understand you, sir. The sudden cessa-

tion of the attack seems to confirm it. Our carriage was the real object. Do you recommend the apprehension of these two men?"

"No, Werner. I would not as yet meddle with them. Let their motions be watched; and acquaint Dennis with our suspicions."

It chanced that one of these drivers had privately managed to exchange places with one already fixed upon to go forward with the carriage, and when it drove up to the door, he was already with the leaders. The landlord enquired of him the reason.

"Jerome has heard that his mother is ill at Brieg, and wishes to see her."

This natural reply readily passed current, but not with Werner, who overheard it. It lulled not his suspicion of some foul play; but on conferring with Charles, it was not even yet considered advisable to notice it, whereas they might ensnare him in his own toils, by being on their guard, for farther mischief was, no doubt, in agitation.

"Let our weapons be ready, Werner; and tell Dennis to be also on the alert, and not to be far in the rear."

Werner had enquired about the character



of the other driver, and was satisfied with the favourable report of his steadiness, and took advantage of a private opportunity to exchange a few words with him.

“What’s the name of your friend on the leaders?”

“He’s no friend of mine,” was the short reply. “Why, do you know anything bad of him?”

“I know no good.”

“Then we must have a watchful eye over him. I don’t like him myself.”

The man seemed to be aware that there was some serious meaning in Werner’s hasty address; but the carriage now drove off, without a chance of farther explanation.

The preceding events had passed with such rapidity, that Charles had not even hinted their occurrence to Matilda, and, contrary to his usual custom, he now deemed it better that his apprehensions should be confined to himself rather than give occasion to alarm which might not be realized.

Dennis was, as before, seated at the side of Mary, who soon noticed that he was unusually thoughtful. He was urgent with the driver,

by no means to lose sight of the other carriage.

"There may not be much difficulty in that," was the reply; "that insolent fellow with the leaders, that has bullied Jerome out of his job, says, one of his horses won't stand out to the next post."

"And do you agree with him, my darling?" said Dennis.

"The horse was as sound as a rock, when I watered him this morning, and I saw him shod myself."

"Then isn't it likely, he's about some bit of mischief?" observed Dennis; "a blind man may read rogue in his face."

"You are about right," replied the driver.

Mary listened to their conversation; and there was something in Dennis's manner that made her suspect his remarks, though seemingly trivial, had some concealed meaning, and with a woman's tact, she soon drew it from him.

They reached a narrow gorge, more than usually desolate and lonely. Terrific precipices overhung the pass on one side, and a deep abyss yawned fearfully beneath them on the other.

The driver suddenly stopped, and turning to Dennis, pointed out something glittering on the road, which, he thought, was a horse-shoe. Dennis sprang into the road, and picked it up.

"I can swear to it; I assisted at the working of it," said the driver; "the new polish is yet on it."

"On, on," cried Dennis as he sprang to his seat; "the carriage before us has stopped."

They soon reached it. Dennis leaped into the road, and joined Charles and Werner, who were on foot, arguing with the driver.

The horse has been ill shod," was his indignant cry. "He has already cast a shoe, and can only go forward at a walk."

Dennis overheard him, and, after exchanging a few hasty words with his master, sprang in front, and presenting a pistol at his head,

"My darling," he cried, with a determined look, "no tricks upon travellers. If you ever said a prayer in your life, now's your time, as this bullet will pave the way for a little daylight into your skull."

The fellow started back terrified, at the sight of the pistol, as well as the furious look that accompanied the action. He cried for mercy; and while Charles and Dennis were

following up their advantage, Werner, with Dennis's driver, who brought up the cast shoe, immediately set about replacing it on the foot, as Werner was always prepared for such emergency. It was done like magic.

Charles ordered the culprit to give up the leaders to the other postillion, and take the latter's place, with a threat of instant death if he swerved from his duty.

Dennis resumed his seat by Mary's side, and the journey was renewed.

These rapid events only occupied a few minutes, during which the ladies stirred not from their seats. They held themselves in readiness, should any chance arise where they might assist without impeding; but no weak alarm broke from them. Matilda's hand grasped her weapon, and her heart was calm and confident. Not a word was exchanged among them; all was thrilling, breathless stillness. They felt that even an unconscious remark might divert the attention solely due to the exigences of the movement. Not so, Mary.

"Mary," said Dennis, "is it not like a blessed christian you have behaved—and that pistol in your hand too. You did right, my darling, in not leaving the carriage."

"I felt no fear, Dennis, but for the dear ladies. I watched all, and would have ventured anything for their safety ; but the danger's not over, Dennis."

"Speak out, Mary."

"You have detected that driver in time ; but he was only beginning the game when the shoe was lost. It was not meant to end there, Dennis."

"And I'm not the man to deny it, Mary."

"He would have led us into a trap, and we must be wide awake yet, or we shall fall into it. Some of his gang, Dennis, must be lurking along the road, to take advantage of this manœuvre, and even while we are talking, they may be about."

A faint whistle sounded from the rocks on the right. It was noticed by all, and the treacherous driver turned his head quickly towards the place whence it proceeded. Charles remarked the movement, and in a moment his pistol was pointed at the fellow's head. This hint was sufficient, and he urged his horses forward.

Two foot-travellers were now overtaken, with bundles at the end of their sticks slung over their shoulders. They were singing



lustily, as if to beguile their weariness, but stopped as the first carriage passed. One seemed to turn away from observation, the other stared boldly at the inmates.

At that moment, one of the horses attached to Dennis's carriage stumbled and fell; but in a moment recovered itself. At the sight, the two men sprang forward,

"Dennis, Dennis," whispered Mary, "the second man is Pierre. Disguised as he is, I know him well."

Dennis had also recognized him.

The whistle rose louder. Some heads peered over the rocks above, and danger seemed imminent.

The two men had now reached the carriage, evidently with some foul intent, when it darted forwards, and Dennis, excited to fury at the sight of one who had seduced him from rectitude and would have made him familiar with crime, hailed him with the cry, "An honest man's respects to you, Mr. Pierre," levelled his pistol at him, and fired.

They hurried on, with almost indifference to the sublime grandeur they had witnessed, to the frontier hamlet of Isella, where with thankful hearts, they alighted at the humble inn.

The actual presence of Pierre as an actor in this murderous attempt, caused an indignant burst of horror.

“But this sad wretch—this driver, Charles, said Matilda; “what do you propose doing with him?”

“The English party that preceded us, it seems, only stopped here to change horses, but made public the outrageous attempt upon them, and our arrival was, in consequence, looked for with eager impatience. The place is in a state of excitement, and the two drivers are loud in their indignant accusations against their fellow, as a disgrace to their honourable fraternity. I have questioned him. He seems alarmed at his situation, and apparently candid in his confession. He knows nothing of the prime movers in this outrage. He looked, he said, only to the tempting reward; but the payment depended upon the success of the enterprize, which though considered easy of execution, was baffled at the outset.

“‘But where, and by whom,’ I asked him, ‘was the bribe to be paid, in case of success?’

“‘After the failure of the first attempt, the next was considered so safe that this very spot was fixed upon for the payment, and the agent is no doubt lurking about. I am your prisoner

otherwise, if the discovery of him is important to you, I might be enabled to assist you.'

"I left him," continued Charles, "in the charge of Dennis, in a small room whose window overlooked the inn-yard, where the people were gathered into knots, discussing the event. Probably on my return, some farther explanation may already have taken place between Dennis and his prisoner, as the former was present during the examination, and was hot upon my allowing the driver to search for this unknown agent whose capture was so important.

"I however told him to wait my return."

As Charles left the room, he encountered Werner in the passage, who hastily addressed him with enquiry after Dennis and his prisoner.

"Since we left them together, Werner, I have been with the ladies, and am now on my return to Dennis."

"You will not find either of them, sir. I passed the room just now, it was empty."

Charles, in some alarm, hastened forwards. The room was in truth empty, and the surprise was mutual. Werner said he found the door closed, but the window that looked upon the innyard, was now open.

“Dennis cannot be far off,” observed Charles, “had his prisoner attempted to escape by the window, it must have occasioned some bustle, and consequently could scarcely avoid being noticed by the people about.”

They enquired in the house, but no one had witnessed their departure. The innyard, the premises within and without, were searched, the alarm became general, and all were in eager commotion to trace the fugitives. The driver of Dennis’ carriage was foremost in the search, as he was vexed at the escape of one who had deeply injured him, and whose character was so notorious.

“I remarked,” he said to Charles, “while I was cleaning my cattle, several people about the window, and peeping in; but I concluded they were actuated by common curiosity. Once or twice I heard the window open, and I could not help noticing two men. The flaps of their white hats were tied under their chin, as if to hide their faces, but on a sudden I missed them.” No one seemed to know them. The ladies were in consternation; Matilda was convinced that Dennis had been spirited away, but Mary’s distress exceeded all. With throbbing heart she assisted in the search, never allowed it to flag, and when she was satisfied

that he was no longer about the premises, she hastened to the front, and gazed with hurried looks on the desolate scenery that environed the hamlet. Except the road on which she stood, there scarce seemed a track for the adventurer's foot amid the ravines, and precipices on every side, and there he would have to be sought, for his captors would naturally avoid the frequented road. She mingled with the idlers about, enquiring and listening, but the solution was everywhere involved in mystery. She passed through the hamlet, and reached the edge of a rugged ravine, where she gazed hopelessly round. The merry voices of children rose from below, and wholly engrossed by her loss, step by step she slowly descended, thoughtless of danger, till she joined them. There were three of them, and they were endeavouring to reach something blown about by the wind, which hung mid-way from the steep rock. It fell at length at their feet, and they were examining it, as Mary came up. It proved to be a man's hat with long flaps, and at the first glance, she recollected that the two suspicious men, noticed by the driver, had worn such. It must have dropt from the steep above, and was she not justified in believing that it belonged to one of the desperate

wretches who had forcibly carried off Dennis, and she shuddered to think, that in these wild regions, a deed of blood might be committed and no eye, save that of Heaven, witness the useless struggle. But not a moment should be lost. She questioned one of the children who seemed an intelligent lad, and as far as she could understand his explanations, she deemed them of such importance, that she induced him to accompany her back to the inn, having previously secured, for a trifling consideration, possession of the hat. Mary's communication caused a lively sensation. The driver was satisfied the hat was the same as those worn by the two suspicious characters he had noticed, and the lad said, a knot of four or five men passed himself and his companions outside the village, and that they stopt to observe them; one of them had a long blue cloak on. At the mention of this, it was suggested by the waiter, the fellow had probably carried off the cloak that was hung up in the room where he was placed under Dennis' charge, and so it proved. This was a decisive clue to the route the fugitives had taken, but it was over a wild, desolate region, little known or visited. This only roused Charles's determination to attempt his rescue, and the reward



he offered for his discovery had so instantaneous an effect, that a knot of young men, broken into parties, undertook the search, and the general interest throughout the hamlet, increased as they set out upon the expedition. Charles and Werner accompanied them to the point, where the hat was discovered, but from an overwhelming feeling as to the safety of the ladies, he was unwilling to proceed farther. But as he cast his anxious look beyond, on the terrific Alpine wildness which seemed to defy the foot of man to penetrate into its mysterious depths, and scale its gigantic precipices glittering with the frequent glacier, he trembled at the probable fate of his honest and attached servant. When he reached the inn, he found his fellow-travellers in a state of despondency, which they could not shake off.

Hour after hour passed, and Charles and Werner went, alternately, to the starting place, in the hope that some discovery might have been already made; but it grew fainter at every visit.

At length, as evening was closing round, Charles again started on his wonted expedition. He had scarcely left the inn, when he encountered some of the returned scouts, who

were hastening to him to make their report. It contained no satisfaction. It was filled with a thrilling account of their own hair-breadth escapes; but not a trace of Dennis; and a deeper gloom followed the sad recital.

It was hardly finished, when the arrival of the rest was loudly announced. Their report was more to the purpose. The leader held up a handkerchief, which Mary, with a scream, sprang forward to grasp. She recognized it; it had been in Dennis's possession that very day, and she herself had prepared it for his use.

The sensation was extreme.

"If," said the man, "that handkerchief belonged to the unfortunate fellow who is missing, he cannot be longer living. We discovered it on the edge of a yawning chasm so deep that, used as I am to such fearful peril, I shuddered to look below; your tempting reward made us insensible to danger, and one of our comrades was lowered down this narrow gulf, being provided with a rope for such emergency, to recover, if possible, the body, as there evidently seemed to have been a scuffle near the edge of it. Our rope was, in

length, thirty yards; but yet not sufficient to reach the bottom of this hideous chasm, where a roaring torrent had, no doubt, engulfed the poor fellow."

Yes, his fate seemed decided. Even Mary, who clung with eagerness to the faintest chance, and was unwilling to admit even the possibility of never again seeing her attached companion, was, at length, compelled to give way to the general feeling.

The scouts were liberally rewarded, and arrangements were made with them by Charles, in the presence of the landlord, in order to facilitate communication with him, in case any farther discovery should be made. When this mournful business was completed, they prepared for their early departure the next morning; and after a sleepless night, on the part of more than one, they left, with oppressed hearts, the little town of Isella, which had been the scene of such a heavy trial.

They reached Domo d'Ossola in safety, though there were some passes which, from their lonely wildness, excited some apprehension, particularly the Val divedro, whose narrow, gloomy defiles were overhung by stupendous

precipices, well calculated for deeds of darkness.

That tragical occurrences had taken place here, was attested, by the frequent cross by the way side.

Before they proceeded onwards, Charles circulated a description of Dennis, and his sudden disappearance, annexing tempting rewards for his discovery either dead or alive; and they now soon exchanged these scenes of desolation and sublimity for the milder features of Italian scenery.

“Yes, dear Matilda,” said Charles, as they left Domo d’Ossola behind them, “I cannot blame you for clinging to the hope that Dennis may be yet living. We have no positive proof of his death; but circumstances militate against the hope.”

“There will be other tears shed for his loss beside ours,” said Madame. “The wife is a widow, the child fatherless.”

Such were the thoughts and feelings that monopolized them as they continued their route. The objects of interest were passed unheeded, or barely noticed, till they came in sight of the lovely waters of the Lago Mag-

giore, and reached, at length, the picturesque little town of Baveno on its borders.

After the wild Alpine regions they had lately traversed, the view of this magnificent sheet of water, from the terrace of the retired inn, with its fairy islands, burst upon the travellers like enchantment, and they gazed in breathless delight as they glided over its placid bosom. It was a combination of such loveliness, such a calm, sunny picture of sylvan scenery and rural repose, that the hearts which had lately been so intensely strained, seemed to share the stillness around them.

They landed on the *Isola bella*, so noted for the triumph of Art which greets the admiring stranger; and as they wandered over the delicious gardens, groves, and terraces, that embosomed the fairy palace; they seemed severed from the world, and all its cares, and paused in frequent rapture on the ascending terraces, at the exquisite beauty of the scenery that presented itself at every turn.

It was a panorama of matchless loveliness, yet as Matilda turned towards the north, she shuddered as she beheld, in the extreme distance, the mighty Alps, with their glittering

coronets of snow, one of whose unknown abysses was the grave of the lamented Dennis.

The same mighty genius that called into existence the stupendous pass over the Simplon was still visible in the beauty of the bridges and aqueducts, till they bade farewell to the lovely lake, and reached the river Tessin, which they crossed in a rude, flat-bottomed boat to the little town of Sesto, whose white walls were sweetly mirrored in the stream. There they remained during the night, and renewed their journey at an early hour, over the level plains of Lombardy, teeming with rich profusion—the whole one magnificent smiling garden, rendered more picturesque by the deep cloudless azure of the skies above.

They now felt they were in the sunny clime of Italy, the air was warm and bland, all nature seemed revelling in the overflowing bounties of Heaven, and their hearts would have expanded freely to the grateful impression; but memory stepped in and flung a chilling damp over present enjoyments.

At length, at dewy eve, they entered Milan by the grand triumphal arch of the Simplon, a fitting termination to this majestic road; and



with undecided thoughts for the future, determined to rest here a few days.

The excitement and consequent fatigue both of body and mind which they had recently undergone, disposed the party to retire early, and after a refreshing sleep, they rose better prepared to mingle with the scenes of novelty that awaited them.

As the two fair friends, on the morning after their arrival, leaned from the balcony communicating with their magnificent apartment, amidst flowers and shrubs of exquisite hue and fragrance, they felt they were in a strange land as they gazed upon the stirring scene beneath them, gladdening the eye with a variety of picturesque costume, and all the novel features of a foreign country.

Yes, they were now in the region of romance and enchantment, where earth and sky combined to bless the favoured inhabitants. Was it an every day exhibition on which they looked? The crowd each moment increased, as the long imposing array, glittering in all the pomp and splendour of a religious procession, passed along the streets. There was the host, borne in state beneath a crimson canopy, and an almost endless

succession of priests in white and scarlet, with crosses and tapers. Soldiers, on foot and on horse-back, with boughs of laurel, and the Viceroy, with all his officers of state, added to the magnificence of the pageant.

It was the celebration, Werner told them, of the "fête Dieu." Stages were erected in the streets, contributing, with their hangings of silk and gold, to the brilliancy of the spectacle. Cheerful voices echoed on every side, save at the passing of the host, when every tongue was still and every knee prostrate in the dust. The host passed, and the joyful hubbub was renewed.

"Emily," said Matilda, "we will put ourselves under the guidance of Werner, and visit the cathedral, which he says is one of the noblest of its kind."

"Yes," said Charles, who overheard the remark, "and we shall be fortunate in the time of our visit. This gay procession, Werner says, is on its route to the cathedral. I know, Matilda, your predilection for devotional music, and you will enjoy it in its fullest perfection."

As they approached the Duomo, their pace was slow, owing to the denseness of the crowd ;

but the potency of money was acknowledged even here; it facilitated their entrance, and procured them seats near the high altar, and they had leisure to contemplate the magnificence of this renowned temple. Its surpassing magnitude, the long withdrawing aisles, the majestic loftiness of the columns of the centre aisle, each crowned with statues as large as life, the dizzy height of the arched roof, the costly stones and gorgeous paintings, and more particularly the dazzling splendour of the high altar, claimed alternate admiration. The elaborate decorations, the profusion of rich tracery everywhere visible, seeming, in the distance, like the delicate touches of the pencil, were not more remarkable than the orderly simplicity of arrangement that crowned the whole of this Gothic structure, over which some centuries had passed, from its origin to its final completion, at the mandate of the French emperor.

Every part was now thronged with eager faces; yet this dense mass of human beings was hushed into stillness as the loud peal of the organ announced the commencement of the service. As it proceeded, eye and ear were alternately absorbed. The exhibitions and

ceremonies that were going on at the altar, they gazed upon with mingled curiosity and wonder. They roused no emotion emanating from the heart; but they were warmly responded to by the enthusiastic devotees that thronged around.

The deep aspirations that breathed on every side, the anxious voices, imploring the mediation of the Virgin Mother, in tones that seemed to speak the inward struggles of the suppliant; could they be otherwise than sincere! But when music added its powerful influence, and unseen voices, with overpowering melody joined the supplicating appeal, in strains meet for an angel's ear, its effect on Matilda's heart was resistless. She surrendered herself to the thrilling enchantment, her eyes swam in tears; and the mighty spell came over her yielding heart with so whelming a tide, that she almost panted for breath. She seemed lifted above the world, lost to all around her, till as the strain slowly died away, and she struggled in vain against her feelings, her sobs were deep and audible. But soon were these blissful emotions dissipated. Yes, the very ceremony that gave them birth now bade it awaken to cold, chilling reality. There was a sudden com-

motion among the dense auditory, every eye was turned towards the altar, a cloud of fragrant incense wholly covered it, the sound of wings was heard, a breathless pause ensued, when suddenly the cloud opened, and surrounded by cherubim, a nail of the holy cross, a precious relic yearly exhibited at this gorgeous festival, was displayed to the enthusiastic multitude. Every knee was bent in adoration, and an awful stillness prevailed for a few moments, when, amid the harmonious chant of female voices, the cloud slowly enveloped again the sacred relic, and the whole mounted upwards, by some secret agency. Then the loud organ pealed "the Gloria in excelsis," countless worshippers swelled the triumphant strain and the glittering pageant was over.

At once gratified and disgusted, they quitted the cathedral. As they descended the steps two ladies were entering a carriage, the elder of whom turned to look at Emily, and so intently that Charles noticed it, but the carriage was now lost in the crowd, and the circumstance gradually diminished in interest. After gratifying their curiosity in driving through the streets of this ancient city, with which Werner was familiarly acquainted, they

returned to the hotel, and induced by the representations of Werner, prepared for a visit to the opera, where a favorite danseuse was to exhibit that evening for the last time, whose fascinations of voice and figure had caused much excitement throughout the city. As evening approached, the fair friends retired to their room to change their dress, where Mary was seated in a disconsolate mood, awaiting them. She had been thinking about Dennis. Matilda noticed her dejection which she could not avoid sharing when she knew its cause.

“During your absence this morning,” continued Mary, “I was informed there was a stranger below, making enquiries about us. I went to him and asked him his business. He affected intimacy with you all, and commenced a string of questions about your future movements. His manner was familiar and impertinent, and I suspected he had some sinister motive in his questions. Instead of answering his queries, I asked his name, and who sent him. He seemed confused, and as if desirous to be gone, but I recommended him to wait till the family with whom he professed himself so intimate, returned, and they would best



satisfy his curiosity. I said this in a bantering tone, and after some frivolous excuse, he hurried away."

Matilda was startled at this communication.

"What do you suspect his object to be, Mary?"

"I suspect that he is linked with those wretches who have caused you such a load of misery, and could I have read his heart, he may have been one of the murderers of poor Dennis."

"Your fears, Mary, may have some foundation in truth. But what sort of a man was he?"

"He was tall and very dark, and I should have thought him good-looking under other circumstances. I had my eye upon him all the time, and I read villany in every feature."

"Mary, I share your apprehensions; the strange circumstance of that lady staring so closely at you, Emily, may have some connexion with this mysterious visit. But Charles must be made acquainted with it."

She accordingly told Charles what had occurred who could not hear it without emotion, and was inclined to think Mary had formed a

correct judgment, but as they were starting for the opera, they had no opportunity for a lengthened discussion. Werner had secured them a box well situated for an observance of the business of the stage, and not perched in those airy regions, where eye and ear are strained to little purpose. The house was crowded, and when they entered, the coup d'œil was enchanting. Its immensity of size, the exquisite beauty of its decorations, the classical taste and splendour that crowned the whole, all alternately claimed admiration.

“And this box too, how roomy and beautiful, more like a boudoir, than a box in a theatre,” cried the delighted Emily as the two lovely girls seated themselves in the front, in all the eager excitement of expected gratification.

During the performance of the opera, they abandoned themselves, in a sort of listless delirium, to the thrilling interest of the scene. With them it was the pure unaffected emotion of nature, unchilled by artificial fetters, as if it were a disgrace to evince sympathy with the melting pathos with which the heroine embodied the inspired conceptions of the composer. They surrendered themselves to the sweet illu-

sion, as the impassioned melody rolled along, now expressive of rage and despair—now sinking soft and slow as the gentler passions of love, hope, and pity, poured forth their eloquent appeal; yet even at such moments, the heartless buzz of conversation more than murmured through the house, affecting indifference to sounds.

“Which might create a soul  
Under the ribs of death.”

Matilda noticed this, and wondered; but a new spirit came over the house at the commencement of the ballet. Every part was then hushed into stillness, and expectation was on tiptoe to greet the youthful favourite. The piece opened with the representation of a rustic holiday on the banks of the Arno, where the happy villagers were assembled before the bower of the queen of the fête. And she appeared in the distance, winding through the flowery maze, to join her loved companions, and at length came forth, radiant with delight. A burst of enthusiastic applause, breaking simultaneously from every part of the house, greeted her appearance, and the lovely girl in

gratitude to her patrons, advanced to the front and gracefully acknowledged, by silent but expressive motion, her sense of the kind reception. The applause continued, and there stood the beauteous statue, with her arms folded over her bosom, and her head bowed, as if overpowered by her feelings. The uproar at length subsided, and in a moment the awakened statue leaped into life, as if impatient of the temporary thalldrom, and eager to share, with all the buoyant vivacity of youth, in the sports and pastimes of the festive day. But who can speak the amazement of Emily as she gazed on the youthful enchantress? Could it be? Was it an illusion of the senses? She sprang from her seat in a state of excitement for which Matilda could not account. She stretched her arms towards the stage and faintly cried,

“ Louise ! ”

Matilda started as she heard the name. She shared Emily's emotion, but prayed her to be calm, and watch with her, as quietly as their feelings would admit, the onward business of the scene. And as they gazed, they were not surprised at the enthusiasm, the natural graces of her manner excited. Here was no artificial

lure, no studied exhibition, no undisguised display of her budding charms to attract the licentious gaze. Modesty went hand in hand with grace to dignify every movement which seemed the pure emanation of the guileless soul, as with ethereal lightness, and every feature eloquent with delight, she abandoned herself to the exquisite enjoyment she ever felt in her favourite dance. She seemed herself in a delirium of ecstasy, to call on all to come and share it with her, and every bosom responded to the call. It was the triumph of Nature; Art had nothing to do with it, and the hearts of that vast assemblage bowed before her, as the heart of one man. But a change came over the spirit of her dream. Age sought the reluctant maiden's hand, and the mother's sordid heart preferred rank, and wealth to the happiness of her child. She was proffered wealth and jewels, but they had no charms for her, and her gentle heart sickened at the change. She now appeared as a bride on the scene; she was now to bid a long farewell to all she held dear, to her weeping companions who were assembled for the final parting. She lingered awhile among her flowers, and slowly, dejectedly came forth. The buoy-

ancy of spirit, the bright laughing eye, the elastic step, were now exchanged for the dull "leaden look that sought the ground."

The glossy profusion of her dark hair, wreathed in classic elegance round her head and simply ornamented with a rose, which characterized her first appearance as the village maid, was now hidden beneath the glittering tiara, and her whole attire was of corresponding magnificence. An approving murmur spread through the house, in admiration of her faultless form, her surpassing beauty, rendered more attractive by the richness of her costume but it was hushed into stillness as the liquid notes of her voice were faintly heard, gradually swelling with more impassioned tone as she poured forth a strain of sweetest pathos, descriptive of her own sorrows.

Emily stood like a statue. Yes, it was the English ballad, composed and adapted, by her own mother, to an Italian air, and now sung by Louise herself, with a magic exclusively her own. It came over her ear, fraught with rich memories of that affectionate parent, every plaintive note woke a corresponding echo in her heart, and her tears flowed fast. Nor was Matilda scarcely less affected. The sight of



Louise gave birth to many serious reflections. She thought of the deserted Ellen. The syren that fascinated the deluded husband was now before her. Seymour himself might be present: and she exchanged a few hasty words with Charles, and turned again to the stage.

The universal stillness which continued even after the close of the plaintive ballad, when its last dying notes still lingered on the ear, evinced the deep sympathy it excited. Yes, those whose hearts so lately seemed lost in indifference, and callous to the intrusion of a better feeling, were now awakened from their dream of apathy, and abandoned themselves without restraint to the indulgence of delicious tears.

The scene went on. Louise started from her reverie, as the impatient voice of the mother chided her delay. She hurried the sad farewell to her loved companions, embraced them warmly as, one by one, they approached her weeping.

There was yet one that stood aloof, and whose despair seemed equal to her own, one whom Louise loved the most, and when she turned towards her for a final parting, all their

past endearment, their mutual joys and sorrows, which from childhood had endeared them to each other, rushed, with fearful force, over Louise's heart, and, with a bitter cry, she flung herself into her arms.

This trait of natural feeling which closed the scene, swept, with electric power, over the house, and was responded to with enthusiastic plaudits from every part.

The next scene opened again on the banks of the Arno, after a lapse of some days succeeding the departure of Louise.

There was a rumour that some disaster had befallen the bridal party. All was uncertainty and suspense among the villagers. The intelligence was confirmed by the unexpected return of Alberto.

Alberto was a handsome youth, the sole stay and support of an infirm mother. He was a lad of adventurous spirit; and though eager to push his fortunes in the world, yet his duty to his mother detained him by her side. She died; and still he lingered on the banks of the Arno.

His neighbours, aware of his wandering propensities, wondered at his delay. He loved

Louise, loved her in secret, for he never told his love. All suspected the cause save the beloved object.

When she was betrothed to another, he abandoned the hamlet, a voluntary exile; but was led by his better angel to the rescue of Louise and her helpless partner, as, on the eve of the bridal day they ventured through a lonely pass, where they were beset by banditti. He cheered on the dismayed attendants to the attack, and the robbers fled discomfited.

A chance shot had struck the old man as he crouched in his carriage, and when they slowly reached his residence, he was borne within in a senseless state. All were loud in praise of the gallant stranger; and when the astonished Louise recognized Alberto as her deliverer from a violent death, or, probably, from more fearful outrage, she warmly welcomed him. She proffered him ample proofs of her gratitude. He refused all; and as Louise gazed on the interesting youth, an involuntary sigh escaped her; but the feeling that prompted it was momentary.

She advised his immediate return to his wonted home, and the abandonment of his

proposed wanderings. It was her wish, and could he refuse?

He reappeared on the banks of the Arno, where rumour had been already busy, In one short month, the lovely bride became a widow, and can it be wondered at, if, when the season of seclusion and widowhood was expired, she again turned towards her native vale? She was now at liberty to think of Alberto, and the service he had rendered her. Was he still free?

When she reached the swelling hills that bosomed her native vale, what thronging memories crowded over her heart, as she gazed on the well-known scene. The passing breeze that lifted her dark locks, was redolent of the past, and whispered peace and jey. She was again the village maid, eager for the wonted pastime with her loved companions.

And now her carriage appeared in sight descending the hill. The news passed from mouth to mouth. Alberto would have been among the foremost; but true love is ever timid.

She reached the hamlet; she descended from her carriage; but the bursting welcome died

on the lips of the circling throng. What could occasion this sudden change? She called her loved playmates by name; she would have embraced them. They seemed, as it were, to endure her kindness, and shrank coldly from it. She was deeply pained, nor was she long in divining its source. Her late seclusion from the world, and the early trials that had chilled her young heart, had almost unconsciously to herself, rendered her step more stately, and her whole bearing, more thoughtful and sedate.

Her former companions looked for the elastic step, the buoyant form, the heart's ringing laugh, as when, in former days, she led the village revels, in all the wild enthusiasm of innocent delight, simply dressed as a peasant girl, with no ornament, save the flowers that grew around her. Now her attire bespoke the lady of rank and wealth, far removed from the humble sphere in which they moved. With such they could have no unreserved intercourse, springing pure from the heart, and the natural gush of affection was checked at its source.

Such were the changes represented in the closing scene of the ballet, in which the talents

of the youthful enchantress stood forward in bold relief. And now she stood lost in thought.

Her former companions silently watched her apart; and even Alberto came not forward to receive a renewal of her gratitude, though his heart panted with emotion to fling himself at her feet.

Suddenly she turned towards her mother's cottage, and hastily disappeared within, while curiosity was on tiptoe respecting her future movements.

At length, a lovely girl issued from the porch, gliding through the flowery maze with arms floating aloft on the air. She was simply dressed in a peasant's garb, and on came the beauteous vision with bounding step, her dark, glossy hair streaming to the breeze, and looks laughing with delight. Yes, it was she, the loved companion of their sports. All pressed forward to welcome her return. Where was now the cold, formal look, the awkward feeling of restraint that checked the free play of their wonted familiarity? One and all clustered, like bees, around her, and one by one she warmly embraced them, nor was the general joy lessened at the marked preference she dis-



played for Alberto. One look directed towards him, one favouring smile brought the devoted swain to her side. This little incident was joyfully noticed, affording a hope she would yet be more closely linked with her native vale. The happy re-union was closed by a dance, which was the crowning glory of the ballet. Though a simple village dance, it was evidently of classic origin, so beautiful were the combinations of the youthful peasants of both sexes. It might be taken for a deification of the divine enchantress who stood in the midst, receiving the homage of her worshipers and dispensing her smiles to all around. Suddenly she waved her arms, the late joyous throng fell back in measured step on each side, and there bent the knee as in silent adoration, and in the centre space the youthful syren stood alone. But she was not long stationary. Happiness, from which she deemed herself for ever estranged, again courted her embrace. She was now released from those fetters, which, though formed of gold, she felt were fetters still. She was restored to her native vale, to the fond companions of her youth, and though she blushed at the sensation, the thought of Alberto en-

hanced every enjoyment. In all the wild delirium of uncontrolled delight, she sprang into motion. She seemed, in imagination, on the banks of the Arno, with no spectators, save her familiar friends, and unconscious of the thousand eyes fastened upon her movements. Her quick, glancing feet responded to her joyous feelings, and the pleasure which she evidently betrayed as she abandoned herself to the changing measures of the dance, soon communicated itself to the enraptured gazers. Never had her natural graces, her unstudied movements, her exquisite symmetry of form, exhibited more resistless enchantment, and over the whole she flung a delicacy, the emanation of her own pure, guileless spirit. She seemed, at length, to wake from her intoxicating dream, as in the progress of her movements, she reached the front of the stage, when she suddenly paused, cast a glance of confused alarm on the crowded faces before her, and with her arms crossed on her bosom there she stood motionless, her eyes bent downwards, as if in attitude of supplication. The silent appeal was quickly responded to, and flowers of bouquets were flung amidst enthusiastic applause at her feet. She gathered

up these fragrant tributes from the stage, and presented them, one by one, to her loved companions, as equally deserving with herself to share this proof of public favor. Then turning to where Alberto stood, she selected one, whose flowers breathed the language which could best interpret her own feelings, and where hope's azure color was predominant, and presented it to him with an encouraging smile. One only flower she took from it and fixed in her bosom.

It was the orange flower. Her triumph was complete.

"She is indeed a wonderful creature," said Charles. "Who can venture to think ill of her? There is purity written upon her brow."

"I cannot believe otherwise," replied Matilda. "Even in this tainted atmosphere she seems to be a world to herself, and to shrink from aught inconsistent with delicacy."

"We must endeavour to see her, Charles," cried Emily, struggling with her tears, "but how?"

"I understand," said Charles, "this night is the last of her engagement at Milan, and no time must be lost."

He determined to devote his best endeavours

to gain some intelligence respecting Louise before he slept, as the opportunity might probably be lost, was he to defer it till morning. He communicated his intention as they followed Werner through the press to the carriage, and the night being warm he seated himself outside with Werner, whom he made acquainted with his purpose, explaining shortly the circumstances that led to it. When they reached the hotel it was not long before Charles summoned Werner, and they left it together on foot.

“When I was waiting for you, sir,” said Werner, “after the close I could not avoid noticing a gentleman, who evidently wished not to attract attention, yet seemed desirous of accosting me, I was passing him when he stopped me.

“‘I know your master well, my friend. At what hotel shall I find him? Does he remain some time at Milan, or is he merely passing through, probably to Rome. Am I right?’

“This string of questions somewhat startled me. I looked earnestly at him, but he suddenly disappeared among the crowd. Probably your approach alarmed him.”

“This is strange,” said Charles, “but I suspect him to be the same curious fellow whose impertinence disturbed Mary. Should you know him again?”

“Easily, sir. He has strongly marked features, is as tall as yourself, and lisps as he speaks. He is evidently a gentleman, and can scarcely be the man that raised Mary’s choler. Are you acquainted with any one that answers my description?”

“I am, Werner. It is Seymour, who cuts so prominent a figure in the short sketch I gave you of Louise’s history. Yes, Werner, we are doubtless at this moment in the same town with the original actors in the plot against our peace. The Count and his wife, who trained Louise for the stage and are now reaping so plentiful a harvest from her talents, would watch with extreme jealousy over her, and one or both be always with her, but in spite of their vigilance I will attempt to see her.”

“During the short time,” said Werner, “that you were within the hotel, I made enquiry where the young actress lodged. We shall have to pass the theatre again before we

reach the place mentioned; but what plan, sir, do you mean to adopt in order to gain admittance to her?"

"I have no alternative, Werner, but at once to request an interview with her, and trust to the consequences."

They were threading a dark, narrow street near the theatre, which seemed solitary and deserted, but their way was suddenly impeded by a carriage, which evidently seemed waiting for some sinister purpose. Two men accompanied it, who paused in their conversation at the sound of footsteps. A sudden thought struck Werner. It was too dark to distinguish them, and he fairly conjectured that something might be learnt by a quick manoeuvre.

"Is all right?" he cried, in an under tone.

"That's a fool's question," answered one, "after what has passed. Now, answer mine. Where's the gentleman? Has he got hold of the girl? It will be a hard case if he lose both the girl and his money too; but it seems likely enough."

"There's no cause for grumbling yet," ventured Werner, in reply. "The time's not up."



A noise was heard in the distance.

"He comes now," said the fellow; "that's the cry of a woman. I guess she's not acting now."

The scream was repeated, and a man came dashing on at speed, yet staggering beneath his burthen.

"Werner," said Charles, "I believe we are on the right scent."

As he spoke, the stranger, heedless of his headlong steps, rendered more insecure by the darkness, stumbled and fell with his burthen to the ground. While he lay motionless, the female sprang to her feet, and having relieved herself from the bandage which wholly covered her head, and hitherto weakened her cries, she uttered piercing screams, but at length sank insensible, through renewed terror, as Charles took her in his arms, and tried to soothe her with assurances of her safety.

"The wretch that lies there insensible," said Werner, "is your friend Seymour, and the girl, you now support, must be his intended victim. Let us begone—his own people will take care of him."

One of them, however, suspecting how matters stood, rushed forwards, with the intent

to wrest from Charles the unconscious girl; but Werner presenting a pistol at his head, he recoiled with fright, and turned to assist his employer.

Meantime, Charles moved onwards with the senseless girl in his arms, determined to return to the hotel and place her under the care of those who he knew were ready to love and to protect her. Suddenly she revived: Charles strove to soothe her.

"Unhand me," was her frantic cry. "You are an accomplice of the villain Seymour!"

"Be not alarmed," said Charles; "I have just now saved you from him. I will take you to friends under whose protection you may rest in safety."

"You are a stranger—how can I trust you?"

"A few minutes will prove," replied Charles, and followed close by Werner, he at length reached the hotel, and with his lovely burthen in his arms, entered the room where the ladies were seated, still engaged in anxious discussion of the events of the evening.

At the strange apparition which presented itself, they all started up. At the first glance, they conjectured that Charles had succeeded in

rescuing the object of their hopes and fears, though they could scarcely recognize in the pale, senseless being before them, one who so lately, by her beauty and brilliant talents, had excited such enthusiastic admiration.

Though their curiosity was strained to the utmost, it was feelingly suspended while they assisted Charles in placing their fair burthen on the couch, on which she lay like a delicate flower. Emily, kneeling by her side, held her passive hand, while means were anxiously employed to recover her.

These endeavours at length succeeded, and as consciousness returned, Louise looked alternately at each individual, and her countenance still indicated alarm, as the faces about her were strange.

“Louise,” said a gentle voice at her side, “when I last parted from you in the steam-boat, when you flung your arms about my neck in sad distress, you breathed a hope we might meet again.”

Louise looked at the fair speaker.

“Don’t you recollect, Louise? It was then, when my mother composed the words of that sweet ballad which you sung to-night at the theatre.”

The features of Louise gradually relaxed into a smile as the recognition slowly took place. It was complete. She grasped more closely Emily's hand, as if afraid to lose her, became in an instant more composed, and sinking on the cushion, fell into a profound sleep. During its continuance, she was removed to Emily's bed, and then, with calmer minds, the friends commented upon Charles's strange adventure, and its fortunate issue.

"The poor girl's disappearance," said Madame, "must cause immediate excitement. The Count and his wife cannot be passive."

"The Count's emissaries," he replied, "will, no doubt, be active in their endeavours to trace her. Should he, however, be so desperate, the better for us. I long to grapple with him."

"All must be conjecture, as yet," remarked Matilda; "but I should think that even now they are busy in their search. It is from poor Louise herself that such information must come as will give us some insight into the past, and influence our movements. I look with anxiety to her waking, when, if restored to self-pos

session, I anticipate her free communication. And Seymour, Charles——”

“Aye, Matilda, these are truly important matters; but they are so linked together, that as we unravel one, we shall gain insight into another; but here comes Emily, with news of our dear invalid.”

She still slept placidly and composed as a child.

“Then retire to rest,” said Charles, “and God grant that the morning’s dawn may bring peace.”

Scarce had they retired, when Werner entered the room.

“I am glad, sir, to find you alone. There is a person in waiting below, even at this late hour, armed, according to his own report, with authority to demand the body of a young actress, who has been stolen from her proper guardians.”

“Go on, Werner,” said Charles, who augured something strange from the expression of his features.

“I have an acquaintance or two in the Austrian service, and from a quick survey of the man and his attire, I suspected him to be an impostor.

“ ‘You are an official, you say—show me your authority.’

“ ‘The lateness of the hour,’ he said, ‘and the suddenness of my instructions are a sufficient excuse for my not having it with me; but retire with me apart, as you probably would not wish our colloquy to be overheard.’

“ ‘Now state your object,’ I said, ‘and your line of action.’

“ ‘I must see your master. If he does not voluntarily surrender the girl he has stolen from her family, I shall use force and search his apartments; it is folly to resist.’

“ ‘My master will not shrink from you; and I fling in your teeth your insulting charge. He is no thief, and before you proceed to extremities, you must produce your authority.’

“ His momentary confusion did not escape me. I followed up my advantage.

“ ‘Your disguise is too palpable. Who is your employer—who sent you here? I dare you to the proof, that you are what you pretend to be.’

“ After a short pause,

“ ‘I must see your master.’

“ ‘Be assured you shall; and we shall be



better acquainted before we part. Follow me.'

He paused.

" ' You had better prepare him, as, I understand he has ladies with him. I will wait your return here.'

" I thought this a necessary precaution. I left him in the small private room at the end of the corridor, not forgetting silently to lock the door outside, in order to prevent his escape, and hastened hither."

" Well managed, Werner," cried his astonished master. Now what is your ulterior object?"

" The capture of the villain below. He is doubtless an emissary of the Count."

" Come then," said Charles.

The hour was late, and silence reigned throughout the hotel, announcing that the inmates had retired for the night, but lamps were still burning.

They reached the retired room; Werner was ready to turn the key; but the door was already ajar. They hastily entered; the room was empty.

" The fellow has overreached me," said Werner, much vexed at the discovery.

"Yet you showed great tact throughout, Werner. This description of gentlemen must be adepts in mastering locks; and I think the consequence of his escape will be that he will report to his employer, the failure of the plot, and that the party will instantly decamp from the city."

"That idea is plausible enough," replied Werner, "as they must now peril their own safety by remaining; but you had better, sir, retire to rest, for to-morrow is likely to be an eventful day."

It may well be imagined with what anxiety the fair friends watched the waking of Louise. She seemed calm and refreshed, though, at first, bewildered, as she looked around; but at the sound of Emily's voice, she flung her arms round her neck.

"It is then no dream."

"It is all reality," cried Emily, as she returned her embrace. "You are among friends, and we will all love you. Madame will love you, Matilda will love you, and Charles, whom you will presently see, will love you, too; but none more than myself."

"Charles! Charles! who is he? I have a confused recollection—is it my preserver?"

"The same, dearest," said Emily. "We were all at the opera last night. I recognized you. You may judge of the interest we all felt about you, as your history is not strange to us. When we returned to our hotel, Charles set forth again, in order to find you out, and was led by Providence to your rescue."

Louise was dreadfully agitated.

"I am safe here—I am not to be given up again."

She was soothed with assurances that her present friends were both able and willing to protect her; but all farther reference to the past was suspended for the present, and Charles was already in the sitting-room, when they, at length, made their appearance.

Charles hastened to meet them, and was much struck with the personal presence of the youthful stranger. She was now in perfect self-possession; and there was a natural dignity in her manner which, added to her prepossessing appearance, rendered her so truly interesting that, even in his eyes, she suffered nothing in comparison with Emily, to whose side she clung. But there were other considerations that invested her with increased interest.

Her name had long been associated with the destroyers of their peace. She had lived with them, was familiar with their proceedings, and from her lips might be expected such unreserved communications as would conduce to important results. Yes, she was now before him, ready to prove her gratitude for the service he had rendered her, and what might not be anticipated!

Ere he could speak, she held out her hand to him.

“I have been already taught, by these dear ladies, sir, not to be afraid of you, or I could not have been thus confident. You are my preserver. What might I not now have been, if you had not saved me?”

“I have myself cause for thankfulness in having been, under Providence, the instrument of saving you from such brutal outrage. We all know your sad history, Louise. Your short life has been an eventful one. The parties who have hitherto harboured you, would you willingly return to them, should they discover you here?”

“Oh, never, never,” cried Louise. “I would have abandoned them long ago, could I have found a place of refuge.”

“Cheer thee, my poor girl. I put the question for my own satisfaction. It is decided, and I shall now know how to act.”

“A truce to farther parley at present,” said Madame. Let us pay our devoirs to the good things on the breakfast table, and be better prepared for what may happen.

Before Werner attended upon his master in the morning, he had been engaged in discovering Seymour’s lodgings. Chance befriended him. He noticed a man walking quickly before him whom he suspected to be one of those concerned in the night’s adventure.

He followed him, through a retired back street into a humble dwelling, and Werner, at once, entered the adjoining house, in order to pick up some information. The woman, who lived there, was a nurse, by profession, of a loquacious turn, and, from her, Werner learned that the subject of his search was now lying in the next house, with little prospect of recovery, and that she had been attending upon him.

In answer to Werner’s questions, she told him the English gentleman had been brought there soon after midnight in a senseless state,

from the effect of a wound in his head ; but how caused, she knew not.

“ Has he had no friends to visit him ? ” asked Werner.

“ He has had visitors ; but I can scarcely call them friends,” said the nurse. “ A lady and gentleman came, in haste, shortly after he was brought here. The gentleman was very much agitated. It seems the wounded man owed him money, and he was that morning to receive it.

“ ‘ Let him die as soon as he likes ; I care not for that.’

“ ‘ Let us stay patiently in Milan,’ said the lady. ‘ You alarm yourself unnecessarily.’

“ ‘ You are surely blind,’ cried her companion. ‘ Has not our plot failed against this blood-hound that is eternally at our heels ? Even now the police may be in search of us. We must begone.’

“ ‘ We must recover the girl first,’ answered the lady. “ We should be rich by her means, but for your extravagance.’

“ ‘ Madden me not, woman ! your own ill-timed delicacy, and foolish scruples have brought us to this pass. Dead men tell no



tales. But we have no time to waste on farther parley.'

"And away they went," said the nurse, "caring as much for the wounded man, as a dead dog."

After this important communication, Werner instructed the nurse to renew her attentions to her patient, to summon medical advice, and that he would return in a few hours. This activity of Werner in procuring information was highly gratifying to Charles, as he was in consequence aware of Seymour's situation, before the breakfast hour. When that was past, as Charles was impatient to visit Seymour after Werner's distressing intelligence, he entered upon the subject of it immediately.

"The acquaintance between Seymour and the Count," said Louise, "commenced at Florence. He was considered as a wealthy Englishman and the Count insinuated himself into his good graces. When I first noticed him at our gaming orgies, I saw, with regret, that he was the victim of superior artifice, and though he lost considerable sums, he never parted with that equanimity of temper, the loss of which afforded so frightful a contrast with many an unfortunate wretch, maddened

by a course of ill-luck. He often found his way to my side which I did not regret, as for the time at least it weaned him from play. I generally retired unobserved from these parties but Seymour's conversation frequently detained me, and I found it at length too interesting for my peace. I make this confession thus early, but the feeling has wholly passed away. He talked of love, I listened. He talked of marriage, I turned not away, and I exulted in the thought of being united to such a man, and emancipated from the tyranny under which I lived. He sent me valuable presents, but these were intercepted by my all-grasping protectors. The simple bouquet which was ready for me every morning on my toilet, sufficiently gratified me. Little did I dream that I was the unconscious victim of an arrangement between Seymour and the Count, and that what I blindly deemed the outpourings of a sincere attachment, was assumed as a wanton cover for his nefarious purposes. My pleasing dream was soon destined to be at an end. We removed to Milan. Seymour followed me and I resigned myself to the delightful anticipation of soon becoming his wife. A rumour reached my ears that he was already

married. I taxed him with it. There was guilt in his confusion, and I forbade his farther attention. Seymour was desperate at my discovery of his baseness, and thence his deed of violence the past night, which I suspect was unknown to the Count."

"You would learn from these ladies, Louise," said Charles, "that we are already acquainted with Seymour, and deeply interested in the happiness of his neglected wife."

"Yes, and I thought myself in a dream when I heard it."

"Our visit also to Italy," continued Charles, "was connected with a rumour that he was fascinated by a youthful dancer, called Louise, and had madly deserted his own wife. Indeed such assertion fell from the lips of the distracted wife. We had already heard of your attractions, but from the previous knowledge we had acquired of you, principally from poor Dennis, fondly hoped and believed that rumour had belied you. Emily, who loved you from the moment she met you in the steam-boat, was eager in your vindication."

"Nor has your confidence been misplaced," warmly responded Louise. "I can scarcely think it real that I am thus surrounded by

friends at a time when I considered myself alone and abandoned by all. But for the sake of the poor wife, for his own sake, let Seymour be visited."

"And if on reaching him, Charles," said madame, "you consider my services may be useful, I will not hesitate to attend upon him."

Freighted with the good wishes of all, Charles, accompanied by Werner, hastened to the humble dwelling which it was evident to him, Seymour had engaged for the purpose of secesy, as so inferior a lodging ill-agreed with his usual habits. They entered at once, and were greeted with the sound of voices in angry altercation. High above the rest, was a woman's shrill tone, which Werner thought proceeded from the honest nurse.

"What, rob the dying!"

"Peace, old crone," was followed by a violent fall and Werner instantly rushed forwards and there, in the very chamber of the invalid, the uproar was going forward. The nurse had been felled by a blow, and two men whom she had in vain resisted, were already laden with plunder. The scene was quickly changed; one robber escaped in the confusion, after drop-

ping his booty. The other trembled under the fierce grasp of Werner, and was recognised by the nurse, as his slouched hat fell to the ground.

“Is it thee, wretch? The gallows will have thee at last. Thy father who has so often forgiven thee at my entreaty, is hunting for thee, and shall now have thee.”

Charles was already at Seymour's bed-side, where he summoned the nurse. There lay the fashionable voluptuary, suffering the penalty of his crimes, and unconscious of all around him. His forehead was almost black from some severe contusion, yet no blood had followed, and all indignant feelings faded from Charles' mind, as he looked upon the helpless wretch. Just then the surgeon appeared, and after a few hurried questions about the cause of the accident, he saw that no time was to be lost. The handsome locks of which his patient was so proud, disappeared at his bidding, and copious bleeding followed; the good effects of which was gradually perceptible. Charles was pleased with the earnest solicitude and patient attention of the surgeon, which he assured him should be well remunerated, as his patient had friends deeply interested in his safety. Af-

ter satisfying Charles that he felt every confidence in his patient's recovery, he gave particular directions to the nurse, and took his leave, promising to return in a few hours. Charles was thus eased of his principal fear. He furnished the kind-hearted nurse with money, she was supplied with additional help, till nothing seemed wanting, which might add to the comfort of the sick chamber. As for the young robber, he was, by the nurse's advice, handed over to the father, the sight of whom had an electrifying effect on the alarmed culprit.

Charles now prepared to return to the hotel, to report to his anxious friends, the favorable progress of Seymour towards amendment, and on their way,

"The fellow that was so lucky as to escape," said Werner, "I recognised as one of our antagonists in last night's adventure. I was anxious to secure him, thinking he might be one of the Count's emissaries, but on questioning his captured companion who was eager to tell all he knew, I consider my suspicions groundless, and that they were mere agents of Mr. Seymour alone."

"It would have been truly vexatious, Wer-



ner, had it been otherwise, as next to capturing the Count himself, it would be important to get hold of any one in his confidence, but would it not be advisable to discover if the Count has actually left Milan?"

"I can probably ascertain that intelligence sir, at the theatre," replied Werner, "where I will now proceed, and join you at the hotel."

When Charles entered the sitting-room, the thoughtful countenances of his friends, proved that they had been absorbed in interesting communication, during his absence. Mary, was also standing behind her mistress, her cheek wet with tears, for the conversation had turned upon the endearing qualities of the lost Dennis, and as Louise bore testimony to his kind heart, Mary listened to the fair speaker, and loved her the more, as one to whom Dennis himself was so sincerely attached.

"Though thoughtful looks greet me," said Charles, "and even some tears, I hope they arise only on reference to the past."

This was soon satisfactorily explained, and his report about Seymour, caused general delight, but particularly to Matilda."

"We have been deep in converse, Charles," said madame, "about past events, and Louise, as might have been expected is bewildered with the little she has as yet heard of the serious causes which have brought us to Italy."

"Indeed, my dear lady," said Louise, "you may well say I am bewildered, yet I fear I have sadder things to hear of. I would not be ungrateful to those who have so long sheltered me. I would not willingly betray them. There are duties which are sometimes hard to fulfil, but I cannot divest myself of feeling."

"Louise," said Charles, suddenly, "do you recollect Edward Mortimer?"

"Yes," cried the agitated girl, "we met in London. Well do I recollect his kindness to me, when I was abandoned by all. But what of him?"

"A fiend in human shape stepped between him and the happiness which was already in his grasp. He has been arraigned at the felon's bar, as the murderer of his friend, as the plunderer of his lifeless corse. Yes, he stood exposed to the public gaze, accused of crimes at which his soul revolted, and was condemned to die. The judge that sentenced him was not more innocent than Mortimer

himself. Think of the agony this gentle lady must have endured at this sudden disastrous event. She loves him still, aye, more ardently than ever; and when the stern voice of the law relented and changed, almost in mockery of mercy, his sentence to transportation for life, she vowed to devote her days to prove his innocence. And now, in the farthest extremity of the world, far away from all he holds dear, herding with characters of the most abandoned kind, the pure-minded outcast is undergoing his unjust sentence."

"And who," cried Louise, with clasped hands, expressive of mingled surprise and anguish, "who is the fiend in human shape that has been the cause of this wretchedness?"

"He," replied Charles, "who falsely styles himself Count, the husband of the public singer, who seduced you from home, and trained you for her own purposes; he was the party who murdered Edward's friend, and was in the act of plundering the body with an accomplice, when Edward suddenly came upon them, and scared them away. He busied himself, but in vain, with his lifeless friend, and amidst such sad employment the police rushed upon him. His representations

were useless, he was dragged before a magistrate, and the evidence was so strong against him, that he was committed for trial, and, at length, condemned to die. The world believed him guilty; but in the hour of trial, his affianced wife forsook him not. She was convinced of his innocence, visited him in prison to console and animate him on his awful career, and in their parting moment, vowed to dedicate all her energies to the establishment of his fair fame. Emissaries were set to work to trace the real murderer, in the course of which the hurried note fell into our hands, which you wrote to Edward in Albany Street, though uncertain of its delivery, previous to the Count's hasty flight from London through fear of detection. Every hour, every thought, since their bitter parting, have been devoted by Matilda to the discovery of the Count, and was I not linked with her by the ties of relationship, the holy cause in which she is engaged, her patient firmness in the prosecution of one absorbing object, would have won me to her aid."

"Oh," cried Louise, shuddering as she spoke, "you have indeed drawn a fearful

picture. I considered the Count a desperate unprincipled gamester; but never suspected him to be thus awfully criminal."

"Would that I could say," replied Charles, "the dreadful picture was complete! Madame le Grand, whom you now see, for the first time, is equally interested in his capture. She married the elder brother of this self-styled Count, who was then so addicted to vicious courses that his brother cast him off after many vain attempts to reclaim him. Madame is now a widow; yet even against this lady, in her unprotected state, did this wretch commence a series of most dreadful persecutions, to wrest from her the large property bequeathed to her by her husband's brother, in order to feed his own riotous living. He did not hesitate to forge a will of a subsequent date, annulling the former one, and kept her in continued alarm with terrifying threats of vengeance. Nor were these empty threats; he bribed her confidential servants, and, by their means, gained free access into her villa on the lake of Geneva. At midnight, he introduced the assassin into her chamber to murder her while she slept. The blow was aimed at her

heart, and would have been fatal, had it not been mercifully intercepted."

Louisa groaned in agony.

"Holy Virgin!" at length she exclaimed, "from what a den of horrors have I escaped! Yet, yet they harmed not me."

"No, Louise," replied Charles, "your exertions, your comforts, were productive of too many advantages to be in any way endangered."

"Then is it not strange," said Louise, "that so long a time should elapse without any enquiries being made after me? The Count is never asleep where his own interest is concerned."

"He has already attempted to recover you," said Charles. "One of his emissaries, in the disguise of an official, was here last night, demanding your restitution, but Werner had too much tact to be imposed upon."

Charles detailed the particulars of the midnight visit, and expressed his conviction that this desperate impostor had been alarmed into a hasty flight from Milan.

"We are too close upon his heels for his comfort, for he is well aware of our presence here. He has already one of Madame's faith-



ful adherents in close confinement at Florence, as he nobly refuses to swear to the authenticity of the forged will. He must be released, for I tremble lest the late events may inflame his jailer to renewed deeds of blood. We must pursue him to Florence, where he is doubtless gone."

"Our engagement at Milan," said Louise, "expired yesterday; and it was the Count's intention to proceed immediately to Florence, where Madame is bound to appear; but his personal fears may induce him to alter his plans."

This interesting conversation, so closely connected with all their hopes, fears and wishes, was listened to with throbbing hearts.

"Your noble-minded cousin," continued Louise, "has devoted all her energies, and her future life, to the re-establishment of Mr. Mortimer's fair name. The object is holy, and the blessed Virgin will bring it to a successful issue. As for the Count, after all I have heard, can I hesitate? But hear me," and she looked at Charles with a face pale as marble, "spare, Oh, spare Madame."

This earnest appeal, so indicative of a feeling heart, roused the general sympathy, and was

quickly responded to by Matilda, who flung her arms round the gentle suppliant and assured her, her wish should be gratified.

“But what,” suddenly observed Charles, “can occasion this long delay on the part of Werner? We parted near the theatre, where he was to pick up some intelligence of the Count’s movements, and meant to follow me here in a few minutes.”

This remark caused some surprise.

Another hour elapsed, and still he came not, and the time approached for the renewal of Charles’s visit to Seymour. After a short delay, Charles resolved no longer to defer his visit to the invalid. He rose to go.

A sudden misgiving came over Matilda.

“Go not alone, Charles.”

Emily overheard the remark.

“Charles,” she hastily cried, “let me accompany you.”

He was, for a moment, startled, but cheered them both with assurances that he had no personal apprehensions.

They watched his departure in thoughtful silence, and then the party closed together in anxious converse.

Charles, in spite of himself, could not shake

off a feeling of depression as he proceeded onwards to the theatre, in hopes of learning, at the box-office, some tidings of Werner. The attendant, however, had no recollection of any such person as described, having called there. He spoke positively, and the sum of his information was the meagre fact that the engagement of the two ladies had expired, and the mention of the place where they lodged during their stay in Milan. As this was at some distance, Charles hastened to visit Seymour.

Before he entered Seymour's chamber, he questioned the nurse.

"I have seen nothing more of Werner," she said; "but you will find a great improvement in the sick gentleman. He is now quite himself again, and the doctor has only just left him, and he assures me his recovery will be rapid. When he first came to his senses, he questioned me how he became reduced to such a helpless state. I told him, he was brought there senseless and bleeding, by two men who were no better than they should be, as they seemed more inclined to pilfer than to help him. 'And what would have become of you,' I said, 'but for a kind young gentleman who came to see you, and at the critical moment

when robbers were carrying off your property. No brother could have behaved kinder. He sent for the cleverest doctor in all Milan, gave me money to purchase necessities, and to ensure my attendance, and every minute I expect his coming again.' I described you, sir, as well as I could, as he was very eager to make you out."

When Charles reached his bed-side, the invalid seemed to be dozing. He watched him in anxious thought whether, on his recovery, he would evince any change of heart and repentance for his past excesses.

The invalid woke, and at length fixed his eyes upon him. He recognized him and turned away.

"Turn not away, Mr. Seymour," said Charles.

"You would abandon me to my fate, if you knew all."

"I already know all," replied Charles. "Yes, all—even to the very moment of the accident that reduced you to your present state."

"I was in the very act of committing a diabolical outrage upon unprotected innocence—know you that?"

"I know it all. It was a deed unworthy of the honourable house of Seymour. I was the means of her rescue."

"You, Mr. Merton! you were, then, the guardian angel to both of us! Is she safe?"

"Yes; and under the care of Miss Godfrey and her friends."

Seymour started up in his bed.

"Miss Godfrey! Where is she?"

"Now in Milan."

"And she too knows all," said the guilty wretch. "Oh, Mr. Merton, spare me for the sake of one whom I have deeply injured. I would not that she knew it: it would crush all hope of that reconciliation which I would fain attempt, though it seems hopeless. My wife, whom I swore, at God's own altar, to protect, and whom I have since basely abandoned! Oh, could I be assured she lives, and would accept my sincere repentance!"

Charles did not doubt its sincerity, and was much affected.

"I have it in my power to ease your anxiety, Mr. Seymour. Your wife is well."

"But where is she?"

Charles detailed their accidental meeting with Mrs. Seymour on the lake, and every

incident that occurred during her stay at the villa, to the hour of parting, when Mrs. Godfrey accompanied her to England.

Seymour listened, in silent wonder, to the narrative. Every word dropped like manna on his bleeding heart. The hue of health almost spread itself over his pale features.

“My dear friend,” he cried, “you are indeed the herald of good tidings; but speak it again. It is indeed a cordial to my heart. Will my injured wife forgive me, and will she again receive her repentant husband?”

“I have assured you of her readiness, and again repeat it,” said Charles, grasping his proffered hand.

“And how can I sufficiently thank yourself and your dear relatives? To-morrow—aye, to-morrow, I hope I shall in person prove my gratitude, for I feel a new man in health and spirits, since your generous visit.”

Such was the result of Charles’s second interview with Seymour, and they parted with hearts swelling with joyful anticipations, and promise of early meeting.

In the meantime, his anxious friends remained at the hotel, awaiting his return.

Thus passed hour after hour, and nothing



occurred to relieve their apprehensions. Werner came not, and the morning wore away in vain endeavours to cheer each other with the assurances that Charles, on his return, might be the bearer of pleasant tidings.

The dinner hour arrived; but he was still absent. They looked at each other with sinking hearts, but spoke not.

“Matilda,” said Madame, after a pause, “in one hour, if Charles return not, we will go together to Mr. Seymour’s lodgings. Fortunately, Charles minutely described the situation, and there we may glean something for our comfort.”

To Emily’s eager request to accompany them she decidedly objected.

“Remain here with Mary, my love, and I will desire the master of the hotel to provide a trusty *valet de place* to attend upon Matilda and myself.”

The hour passed away; nothing intervened to relieve their suspense, and attended by the valet, who was a young man of prepossessing appearance, named Antoine, the two ladies set forth on their important expedition.

They reached the humble dwelling in safety, and found the nurse in attendance, who received

them with surprise, but freely answered all questions relative to the young gentleman who had visited the invalid.

Her replies astonished them. From them it appeared that Charles had twice visited the house that day, that some conversation of an interesting nature had passed between them, though the nurse knew not of what nature, but the beneficial effect of which on the invalid was instantaneous ; and that after the departure of his visitor, he had risen, dressed himself, and was now busy, writing.

“ Tell him, good nurse,” said Madame, “ that two ladies wish to see him.”

She readily obeyed ; and on her return,

“ He was still,” she said, “ engaged in writing when I entered. He had the sweetest smile on his face, and to appearance, quite well. When I at last delivered the message, he started from his seat, and his questions were hurried about you ; but I could neither tell him name or business—but here he comes.”

As Seymour entered the little parlour, the nurse retired.

The flush of excitement was on his cheek, and there was no appearance of illness about him. His look first rested on Madame, who

was a stranger to him. He turned to the other, who was seated in an obscure part of the room, so that he could not distinguish her features.

“Our business, Mr. Seymour,” said Madame, “must excuse the step we have taken in thus waiting upon you. Mr. Charles Merton has visited you twice to-day. Do you know anything, sir, of his intended movements when he last parted from you?”

“None whatever,” replied Seymour; “but his visit to me was one of unexpected happiness. May I ask the motive of your enquiry?”

“You will not be surprised, sir, at our present visit, when you learn that I am enquiring after a young friend whom I highly esteem, and Miss Godfrey after a relative whom she dearly loves.”

“Miss Godfrey!” cried Seymour, “and do I behold Miss Godfrey here—the recital of whose goodness, from Charles’s lips, has this day elevated me to a pitch of happiness which I own I deserve not. Oh, Miss Godfrey, let me confirm my sincere penitence to you, and pour forth my blessings upon you for your kindness to my injured wife.”

“Mr. Seymour,” replied Matilda, “your language is mysterious, though gratifying. At any other time, I would gladly ask an explanation; but now, other cares press upon me. Many hours have elapsed since my cousin parted from you, and our suspense has been intolerable, owing to his lengthened absence from the hotel. The object of our visit here is to endeavour to trace his steps.”

Seymour looked surprised.

“What mischief can you possibly apprehend, Miss Godfrey? He may be engaged with some friend.”

“Oh, no, Mr. Seymour. You are not wholly ignorant of my history. Since a certain dreadful event, I have been involved in dangers of no common kind, at the hazard not only of my own life, but those of my dearest friends. Even now, these perils are more than ever alarming. The dagger has been busy, though happily yet in vain. Our trusty servants have been spirited away from us—one this very day; and Charles, whose active fearlessness on our behalf has rendered him the object of our persecutor’s deepest hatred, has suddenly disappeared. He is our sole remaining protector.”

“Your sole remaining protector, Miss Godfrey! Never while I have an arm to lift in your defence. My life, my all is at your service. Tell me, dear Miss Godfrey, how I can assist you.”

His hearers were sensibly affected at this sudden and unexpected avowal. It seemed almost miraculous, as they could not hesitate in their belief of its sincerity; and, in a moment, they were both impressed with the conviction that he might be of singular service to them in their endeavours to unravel the mysteries that thickened round them.

Matilda assured him of the unalloyed satisfaction she derived from his candid confession, which she knew would be welcomed with rapture by his heart-broken wife who still loved him.

“I cannot reject the offer of your services, Mr. Seymour. I accept them as freely as they are tendered.”

She then gave him a sketch of her history, that he might better understand their present dilemma; and when she brought it to a close, he gazed at both his visitors in silent astonishment.

“Your story, Miss Godfrey, almost sur-

passes belief. When I last saw you, you were surrounded by perpetual sunshine, and it then appeared that yourself and sorrow would be ever strangers. How do I find you now? You require my aid, and you shall have it. The knowledge which I already have of the Count Trapani, who, it seems, is your deadly persecutor, under a feigned name, may facilitate my efforts."

A knock at the door stopped farther discussion. It proceeded from the nurse announcing the doctor's presence, and Seymour retired for a few minutes.

When his visitors were left alone, scarce could they find words to express their surprise at the result of their interview, which presented them with a gleam of hope, and a protector, whose services were as unexpected as they were gratifying.

Presently the nurse entered, and, dropping a curtsey,

"Please, ladies, interfere with the gentleman. The doctor insists upon his remaining quiet in bed, he is so very feverish; but he urges that he is quite well, and must go out. The doctor tells him that if he would submit



to his directions till the morning, he might be so amended as to be his own master afterwards."

Matilda strenuously advocated the doctor's advice, and his patient yielded, though with an ill grace.

"At an early hour to-morrow," he said, at parting, "I shall hasten to your hotel; but, in the mean time, Miss Godfrey, will you consent to peruse this letter? It contains the outpourings of a penitent heart, and details, at length, my last interview with Charles, to whose manly and generous conduct I am so deeply indebted. These particulars, it may be gratifying, and, indeed, important, that you should know, as his disappearance followed so immediately. To-morrow you can return the letter."

They retraced their steps to the hotel, with minds still thoughtful, yet much relieved from their former depression.

When they reached it, they found Emily and Louise seated together, with Mary at their feet, as adversity tends to level all distinctions. Charles had not returned, and no tidings of him had been yet received. The tears were

wet on Emily's cheeks, and her looks spoke utter wretchedness. She turned eagerly to read their countenances as her friends entered the room.

The news they brought, though it afforded no clue to the cause of Charles's absence, was, however, of no trifling moment, and they greedily listened to it. The future did not now wear its late vague undefined aspect. They had something now to rest their hopes upon, and on what to found a calculation of probable contingencies. They had gained in Seymour a zealous friend, and they cheered each other with anticipations of relief from his interference, and, particularly, as he was already so conversant with the character and whereabouts of the Count.

"Is it not," cried Matilda, while the holy light of confidence gave unwonted energy to her look and voice, "is it not a special act of Providence in our favor when longer struggle seemed desperate? Emily," she continued, as she kissed her wet cheek, "those tears will yet be succeeded by joy; but we must not be wanting to ourselves. If we slumber, Charles may be lost."

This startling remark had its effect. Her bosom seemed to expand with new-born thoughts.

"I have done with tears, Matilda. I will be all you wish me."

"And now," said Matilda, turning to Madame, "the plan which we arranged together, as we returned to the hotel, must be forthwith adopted."

She rang the bell, and on its being answered, desired the presence of the master of the house, who shortly obeyed the summons.

"We have sent for you, sir," said Matilda, "as it is in your power to do us a kindness. We wish an officer of the police to be sent for."

This unexpected announcement was received with surprise.

"May I be excused asking," said the master, with an embarrassed air, "if the request has any reference to my establishment? Has any member of it given cause for suspicion?"

"Far from it," replied Matilda; "we have here no ground for complaint. Our present distress arises from a more serious source. We

have reason to believe that not only Mr. Merton's servant, Werner, but Mr. Merton himself, has been this day waylaid, and carried off for some desperate purpose."

"Do I hear aright," cried the astonished master.

"Mr. Merton," said Matilda, "has incurred this hatred as the fearless defender of innocence, but time presses, sir, and the danger is imminent."

The master hastily withdrew. The evening was closing fast. Every voice, every step that approached their room was eagerly listened to, and the interval passed in increasing suspense, till the arrival of the officer who entered the room, accompanied by the master and Antoine, both of whom Matilda requested to remain. She felt that she was now called upon to act with energy and decision. The last scene of the eventful tragedy in which she had borne so prominent a part, seemed now at hand; and it was indeed a thrilling spectacle when Matilda stood forth to lay before the officer the alarming perils that surrounded herself and those dearest to her heart, and which had now assumed so formidable an aspect as to warrant the interference of the official authorities.

Her manner, her voice were calm yet energetic and never for one moment lost sight of that feminine dignity which was the crowning grace of the lovely speaker. It was necessary that the official should thoroughly understand the true bearing of their situation, in order to render his services effectual, and her narrative was consequently distinct, and full. Dormer's first acquaintance with the Count, its fatal consequences to himself, the Count's escape after his murder of Dormer, the apprehension of Edward, as the real murderer, his trial, conviction, and ignominious sentence, all these she impressively detailed as being the foundation on which every subsequent adventure rested. The official, as she proceeded thus far, listened respectfully, and with increased interest, never once interrupting her, except to assure her that the knowledge of any domestic details she thought proper to enter into, should be strictly confined to the purposes for which they were intrusted. And she continued the sad history which deepened in interest as the successive villanies of the Count opened out in fearful detail, causing evident excitement in the officer, particularly when Matilda, in the natural order of events,

reached the period of her arrival at Madame Legrand's villa, on the lake of Geneva. Her discovery of the pretended Count's birth, his persecution of Madame, and attempt on her life, the failure of which appeared to madden him to more desperate deeds, were one by one, dwelt upon with the awful consequences resulting from each.

"Himself and his agents of murder," said Matilda, "were ever on our track as he was aware of our knowledge that he was the real murderer of Mr. Dormer, and that in consequence his own life was in peril as long as we lived. Scarce had I reached Madame's villa from England, in company with my relative, Mr. Merton, whose spirit and energy have been so valuable in thwarting the designs of this unprincipled wretch, when his assassins were let loose upon us. At Vevay, when Mr. Merton and myself sauntered at a late hour on the banks of the lake, the murderers were lurking in our path, but providentially their design was intercepted, and we were enabled to turn his own weapons against himself, by winning over, on the spot, to our service, one of his most zealous agents who had undertaken our destruction, and who, by his own confession



had previously attempted the midnight murder of Madame Legrand in her own villa. He was a kind-hearted Irishman, named Dennis, who had been long in the Count's employ, and so duped by his misrepresentations that he considered it meritorious to rid the earth of such monsters as my dear friends, and myself. He became sincerely attached to us, and the Count could not contemplate this desertion of Dennis without serious alarm as he was too well acquainted with his plans; and his agents were let loose upon us with more rancour than ever, to sweep us all from the earth."

Matilda now detailed the several attempts on their lives, on their route to Italy, particularly during their passage over the Simplon, the sudden and alarming disappearance of Dennis, and continued her narrative to their arrival in Milan, only three days previous ending with the crowning blow which had that day come upon them like a thunderbolt, and had decided their instantaneous appeal to the authorities.

"There was every reason," she said, "to fear that Mr. Merton and his trusty servant Werner had been this very day waylaid and carried off by their ever-watchful foes. Our

male protectors, our sole remaining guardians, are torn from us, leaving us defenceless in a strange land, but it is not so much for ourselves, as for those we have lost, that we now solicit official interference on our behalf. Time presses, even now the dagger of the assassin may be hanging over them. We call upon you to assist in their rescue, if haply it be not too late."

Matilda paused in her eventful tale. The partners in her afflictions hung round her with swelling hearts, and ever oven Antoine, the story came with overwhelming power. He gazed upon Matilda, as upon a superior being, in whose defence he would have grappled with a world. His hands were firmly clenched, his teeth were closely set, his brow darkened, as if in defiance of any hostile attempt against her peace. But the general attention was at length turned upon the officer with even painful suspense, in order to catch the first word that should fall from him, indicative of the effect produced by the narrative. His intelligent features were for the moment covered with thought.

"Lady," he said, at last, "I was not prepared for such a revelation. There are many

circumstances which, when more closely enquired into, will, I doubt not, confirm my suspicions that this pretended Count is not wholly unknown to us. We walk through crowds with seeming indifference, but our eyes are everywhere. I must be excused asking one leading question. I would not wantonly probe any painful wound except to give more effectual relief."

"I believe you," observed Matilda; "speak on."

"The origin of all your successive perils—of this false Count's never-dying hostility against you—seems to have arisen from your discovery that he was the real murderer of Mr. Dormer. I gather from your statement that, for this very murder, one Edward Mortimer was apprehended, tried, and though innocent, convicted and sentenced to transportation for life. You step forward, in the face of the world, as the champion of this man, and peril your life in vindication of his innocence. I understand you are high-born and wealthy, and your appearance, and all I have seen and heard, confirm it. You are young—very young—to encounter these deadly struggles; yet, the unbending firmness of pur-

pose you have throughout displayed, to this present moment, is almost without parallel. Pardon me, lady—there must be some powerful motive for all this.”

“You are right,” replied Matilda, in a calm steady tone; “there is an all-powerful motive for it. This Edward Mortimer, whom the law has used so roughly, is my superior in his station of life. Before this blight came over his fair fame, we loved each other. I was his affianced wife—could I abandon him in his distress? In our last interview, in his prison-cell, I vowed, on my knees before Heaven, to be true to him, and to devote my days to the re-establishment of his innocence.”

“Forgive me, lady,” cried the officer, in an excited tone; “the question, I repeat, was not wantonly put, and it has elicited a noble reply. The picture, in all its features, is now complete; but there are some minor parts. Who will describe to me this pretended Count, that we may judge of his identity? This lady is, I presume, Madame Legrand?”

“You are right, sir,” said Matilda; “she lived with me some time in England, when a widow, and only left me in consequence of the ample fortune bequeathed to her by her late

husband's brother, in Switzerland. It was to recover this fortune that Etienne Legrand, the youngest of three brothers, already noted for his vices, commenced a series of the most deadly hostilities against her. Of this Etienne Legrand—this impostor Count—Madame is ready to speak."

And the details entered into by Madame were of that important nature, that they commanded the earnest attention of the officer, as relating to the principal actor in this fearful tragedy. His birth, appearance, manner, voice, were all severally commented upon, with the black catalogue of his crimes against herself, commencing with the forged will.

"Baptiste, imposed upon by Etienne as to the nature of the document, was induced to sign a paper which Etienne represented as an authority for a distant agent to act for him. It proved to be the forged will in his own favour, and Baptiste's name, as witness to the testator's supposed signature, gave it a specious appearance. The fraud was discovered; Etienne was alarmed, and endeavoured to bribe Baptiste and his sister; but they spurned his offers, and fearful of the threatened exposure, he had recourse to desperate measures. I

attended, only a few weeks ago, the dying bed of the sister, and there were well-grounded suspicions on the part of the nurse, that her death had been hastened by poison. Her last moments also were embittered by her fears on account of Baptiste, as Etienne had, by false pretexts, seduced him from home, and there was cause to apprehend the worst. Little was I then aware that my own servant Pierre, in whom my confidence was unbounded, and whom I ever treated more as an attached friend than an inferior, had been some time in the pay of Etienne, and betrayed my every thought and movement to him. My female attendant also fell from her integrity, so that I was surrounded by enemies. Etienne and his associates were admitted to my villa by night, and a murderous attempt was made on my life while I slept in my chamber, the failure of which seems to have exasperated our enemies. You are already aware, from Miss Godfrey's statement, of the providential escape of herself and Mr. Merton from these untiring assassins, at Vevay, and of the capture of one of them, named Denis, which led to important results. This man entered into our service, and it was from his honest disclosures that I was, for the



first time, made acquainted with the alarming state of my household, and the imminent perils that had so long surrounded me. The guilty Pierre immediately absconded, when he was openly proved a traitor; but Minet was not so fortunate. She was discovered by Dennis hovering about the villa, in the disguise of a gipsy, and committed to prison, where, overcome by terror and remorse, she made ample confession of her many crimes, and gradually drooped into the grave. Still they hung upon our path as we approached the Alps, and their last attempt upon us in a lonely mountain-pass over the Simplon, when Pierre himself was recognized among the assailants, might have proved fatal to us all, had it succeeded; but it was, like the rest, frustrated by the activity and fearless spirit of Mr. Merton and our two trusty attendants—but where are they now? Doubtless, in the power of our merciless enemies.”

“In the description you have given of this pretended count,” said the officer, after a pause, “I recognize some features which agree with that of some notorious character suspected of having robbed, or of being privy to the robbery of a wealthy citizen in Florence; but he is

represented as wearing large whiskers, and a scar on his left cheek—a professed gambler, but of mild, winning manners.”

“I can reconcile the contradiction,” observed Louise. “The Count had several disguises. He is naturally a fair man, as Madame represents; but, sometimes, he would assume bushy whiskers, and such he wore during our engagement at Florence, farther disguising himself by an artificial scar on his left cheek, so that his identity, at first sight puzzled myself.”

The officer had more than once fixed his observation on Louise, as if her features were familiar to him

He now recognized her, as she was speaking, and was startled by her remark, not only from its decisive nature, but as coming from so unexpected a quarter.

“This young person,” he said, turning to Matilda, “was exhibiting last night on the boards of the Opera house. She seems intimately acquainted with this impostor. Whence does it arise?”

Matilda replied by a sketch of Louise’s history. She stated the origin of her connexion with the stage, by the intrigues of Etienne’s supposed wife, herself a public singer; Emily’s

first acquaintance in the steam-boat; and concluded by their recognition of her last evening during her performance at the Opera house, the determination of Mr. Merton to gain an immediate interview with her at all hazards, as her engagement at Milan expired that night; and the important service he, accidentally, rendered her at midnight, by rescuing her in the public street, from brutal violence, and conveying her here in a state of insensibility.

The officer remained thoughtful a few moments.

“The plot,” he at length said, “seems now to develop itself more freely. I have never known a Chevalier d’industrie live without a female associate, whose tact and cleverness are so frequently required to throw a decent covering over their villanies. My doubts are fast clearing up, but was this guilty pair at all linked with the outrage upon this young female last night?”

“I am inclined to think not,” replied Matilda. “Your pointed question must, however, bring another actor upon the scene, in the person of a young Englishman, named Seymour. We have been long intimately acquainted, and only lately he married one to

whom I am deeply attached, and travelled with his bride to Italy. Here he became acquainted with this false Count, who seduced him into deep play, and he thoughtlessly submitted to very heavy losses, being fascinated by the attractions of Louise into whose society he was thrown, by the impostor, in order to blind his dupe to his glaring frauds. His infatuation was so great that he was madly tempted to desert his wife, who has found an asylum under my mother's roof in London. It was this Seymour that Mr. Merton intercepted last night, with the struggling girl in his arms, in his attempt to reach a carriage, which was waiting him in a lonely street. In his blind haste, he stumbled and fell, and his fall was so severe, that he lay on the ground insensible which enabled Mr. Merton to bear off the rescued girl to a place of safety. Notwithstanding this desperate outrage, Mr. Merton, actuated by pity for the heart-broken wife, started at an early hour, attended by Werner, to discover Seymour's lodgings, in the hope that out of evil some good might ensue. He found him laid on a poor, cheerless bed, still insensible, in a dark, solitary street, with none

to look after him, save a kind old nurse, who attended him from pity.

“Mr. Merton’s presence caused a sudden and beneficial change, to the delight of the nurse. The room was rendered comfortable, surgical aid summoned, and nothing was wanting that was deemed essential to his recovery.

“It appeared, from the nurse’s statement, that a lady and gentleman had called at sunrise, both much agitated. Their behaviour and remarks about the wounded man were, she said, harsh and unfeeling, and mixed with violent invectives against each other. The gentleman insisted upon the necessity of their quitting the city instantly, otherwise the police might be upon them. The other laughed at his fears, and said the girl must first be found. After much altercation they left the house.

“These visitors were, doubtless, Etienne and his wife. Mr. Merton quitted the invalid, after fixing the hour of his return, and parted with Werner, whom he instructed to enquire at the theatre about the movements of this notorious pair, and to report to him, at the hotel, where he was himself hastening.

“Werner has not since appeared. Our alarm was great, and Mr. Merton left us to make enquiries, and to pay his promised visit to the invalid. He found Seymour restored to consciousness, and the interview between them, was truly satisfactory. His repentant thoughts turned towards his wife, and the result was all that could be wished. This we learned afterwards from Seymour himself. Mr. Merton never returned to the hotel.

“After a long interval of suspense our fears were so overwhelming, that Madame Legrand and myself ventured forth to visit Seymour, attended by Antoine. From him we learned the particulars already stated, and he shared our apprehensions so strongly, that, weak as he was, he would have started forthwith on the search for Mr. Merton; but the surgeon positively forbade this exertion till the ensuing morning.

“We returned here, and our first step was to summon your attendance, as the crisis was too fearful for hesitation. I have been thus explicit, in order that your interference may be effectual.”

“And never has my interference been required,” said the official, “when I have felt more



lively interest; and rest satisfied that your confidence shall not be abused. I must communicate with this Seymour, as his knowledge of this desperate impostor will be useful. Believe me, the matter shall not sleep in my hands; and it will require more ingenuity than I conceive he is master of, to escape the blood hounds that, in one half-hour, will be let loose upon his track. Know you, lady, a gipsey woman, of the name of Fanchon?"

"I do, I do," exclaimed Matilda, and she clasped her hands in momentary terror, as she called to mind her fearful interview with her.

"When the master of the hotel," continued the officer, "was communicating with me, I observed the gipsey hovering about the guard-house intently watching us. I accosted her ere I started for the hotel, as, from my previous knowledge of her, I was satisfied she had some peculiar meaning in her conduct.

"‘I have long been expecting this crisis,’ she said. ‘I have been on the watch. You know the lonely ruin on the Apennines. Balfour is ready.’

"‘Tell him then, good Fanchon, to meet me here in two hours.’

‘As we parted,

“ ‘Assure the ladies,’ she cried, tightly grasping my arm, ‘that all may yet be well. Bid them be confident.’ ”

“And may blessings rest upon her,” exclaimed Matilda, “for this encouragement.”

“At an early hour to-morrow,” said the officer, with a bow, “expect me again.”

As he was leaving the room, Antoine seized him by the arm in strong excitement.

“Take me with you; make me useful for these dear ladies. I will do anything, only tell me how.”

“Antoine,” replied the officer, “I acknowledge your zeal, its motive is creditable to yourself; but the ladies will require your personal services. For the present remain here.”

## CHAPTER II.

THAT momentous interview, which decided that the mighty engine of official authority was to be called into action on their behalf was now past. They felt, for the moment, as if a heavy millstone was taken from their necks, and that the alarming responsibility, which lately weighed so exclusively upon themselves was transferred elsewhere, and that their peace and security would now be ensured. They breathed more freely.

A gigantic power was roused in their defence, and all that seemed now required from them was to remain passive, and wait with

confidence the closing scene of this eventful tragedy.

A corresponding cheerfulness was visible in all, contrasting strongly with their late despondency.

“And now,” said Matilda, “let us, for a while, forget our own trials, and revert to the happier destiny of Mrs. Seymour.”

She produced and read aloud the letter which Seymour had entrusted to her for perusal, and the contents were of so affecting a nature that they elicited tears, and even Louise forgave the outrage committed against herself. It presented a glowing picture of deep remorse for the abandonment of his beauteous and confiding bride, even when his solemn vow at the altar, that he would cherish and protect her, and forsake all other for her alone, had scarce ceased murmuring from his lips:—

“Oh, that I were at your feet to convince you of my sincere penitence, and that it shall be the business of my future life to endeavour to atone for the past! Yet, will you not spurn me from your presence? My

crime is great, so ought to be my punishment ; but whatever be your sentence, I deserve it all, as the penalty of my desperate career. I will not attempt my own vindication. I have none to offer, but throw myself for forgiveness on that gentle heart, which I once rejected as worthless ; but now, when I fear it must be for ever closed against me, my eyes are open to its true value. I stood on the brink of a yawning gulph, and was ready to take the desperate plunge that would have consigned both body and soul to perdition, when a friendly hand saved me. My guardian angel was one to whose hand I once aspired, from mercenary motives, for her wealth was my only aim. Can it be wondered at, that I met with a deserved repulse ? Yet, in spite of her discovery of my despicable meanness, it is under her own mother's roof that my deserted wife has found a shelter, it is by her means that I live to address you, that I am roused to remorse for the past, and dwell upon the sweet hope that she has given me that I may yet regain your confidence. Oh, when I woke from my delirium, and my look rested upon her noble cousin Charles, patiently watching

by the humble bed, where I had so long lain insensible, I shrank from his presence, in an agony of shame. Yet he uttered no reproach, but waited upon me like a brother, and won me to open my heart to him. Trembling I breathed your name, and how greedily I listened, as the generous youth removed my fears. Every word was balm to my altered heart, as he detailed your meeting with the Godfreys, and their subsequent kindness after my recent abandonment of you. How can I repay that ready sympathy which displayed itself not in words only, but in deed, and in truth, at a time, too, when their own sorrows pressed so heavily upon them.

“Yet I have one paramount duty to fulfil, which, though you bade me hasten to your arms, must be first attended to, and you will yourself, admit its prior claim. Miss Godfrey is in danger, she requires my aid; my own selfish longings must yield to this pressing case, though at the hazard of my life, which I hold at her bidding, for is it not her own gift? I will prove to her that the kindnesses which she has so liberally showered over me and mine, have not been scattered upon a thankless soil.”



Such were the heart-breathed confessions of the returning prodigal, and who could doubt their sincerity?

The fair friends forgot awhile their own troubles, in delightful anticipations of Mrs. Seymour's approaching happiness, and of the thrill of ecstasy which would break over her benighted soul, when this interesting document reached her. But these thoughts were as transient gleams in a day of darkness. The glow of glad excitement they gave rise to, gradually faded away, as other thoughts that would not be resisted, slowly obtruded themselves.

They thought not of sleep. During the whole night, they separated not, one painful surmise following another, giving vent to apprehensions which they could not evade, as stern reality stared them in the face. They recommended one another to retire to rest, but none moved, as if there was safety only, when together.

What if Seymour, from over exertion, should be incapacitated from rendering his promised assistance! Such a possible failure of what seemed the pillar on which their hopes rested, flung a gloom over every face, and

though Antoine frequently entered the room, reminding them of the untasted meal, it still remained untouched. At length the dawn came, breaking upon pale and thoughtful countenances, but as night, and its solitary loneliness passed away, and the morn spread bright and beautiful, they felt its reviving influence. The busy hum now rose from the streets, and every moment they might expect some communication deeply affecting their interests, whether for good or ill. Antoine arranged the breakfast table in silence, and as they were slowly assembling round it, he again hastily entered with a pressing request from a decent woman below, for admittance.

“Introduce her at once, Antoine,” said Matilda, with a palpitating heart, and he quickly returned with the kind nurse that attended Seymour.

“He’s gone,” she exclaimed, on recognizing her former visitors.

“Gone,” cried Matilda, in alarm; “of whom do you speak?”

“Of the young gentleman; another day or two under my care, and all would have been right. But against my advice, and without

the doctor's knowledge! Oh, he will repent his wilfulness and obstinacy."

"And no message for me," replied Matilda.

"Blessed virgin!" exclaimed the nurse, "I had for the moment forgotten it."

She handed a letter, which Matilda tore open with a trembling hand, and read as follows:

"I had submitted myself to the care of my good nurse, after your departure, my dear Miss Godfrey, and was preparing for rest, when a police officer surprised us both, by a request for admittance. He had just parted, he said, from you, and I could almost have worshiped him for the manly feeling he betrayed on your behalf, scarcely to be expected from men engaged in such stern occupation. If human energy can extricate you, you are safe. He is already in possession of intelligence which must and will be followed up with spirit. He has just left me, but will return in one hour after making final arrangements to quit Milan. He tells me to hold myself in readiness, as he may probably require

me to accompany him. I write this in his absence, in order to save time."

P.S.—"He is just returned. I must accompany him. Be confident of a happy result. Quit Milan, this day or to-morrow, and proceed onwards to Genoa, and there wait farther intelligence. The officer has arranged an addition to your escort, an active fellow named Pietro, who is in the officer's confidence, so that under his and Antoine's protection, you will travel in safety. I feel every constitutional weaknesss vanish, at the prospect of assisting in this holy cause, and proving my gratitude for the past. Fear not, an invisible power watches over you. Now grant me one favour: will you kindly forward my written confession to my injured wife. Say of me what you will, if kindly I will strive to merit it, if otherwise, I deserve it. One concluding word about Louise. Let her know all, how deeply I deplore my late outrage, but the ways of providence are inscrutable. Who could foresee such a result."

"How did Mr. Seymour look, good nurse,"

enquired Matilda, "when he parted from you?"

"Look! I told the officer he was not fit for such rough work. Well, the blessed virgin shield him!"

The nurse now rose, and on parting, positively refused the gift Matilda tendered to her, saying that she had been already too liberally rewarded. Seymour's letter was now the all-absorbing subject. There was nothing absolutely depressing in it, indeed its purport was cheering, and calculated to dispel despondency, but the contents were so singular and unexpected, that the first impression was disappointment. But soon better thoughts prevailed. Every sentence was analysed, and the issue was comfort.

Had not Seymour forgotten his own more urgent claims in his zeal to serve them? Had he not, though weakened by illness, started willingly and cheerfully from his sick-bed, and volunteered uncertain dangers on their account? Had he not abandoned the sweet hope of immediate reconciliation with his sorrowing wife, and all for them, and could they shrink in alarm, and hesitate in their duty? Where was Charles? Where was Werner?

Where Dennis? and where Baptiste? In the power of their bitterest enemies, looking to them for help, if death had not already overtaken them. Their path was already traced out for them in Seymour's letter, and they had no alternative, but implicitly to obey the instructions.

Such were the sentiments that fell from Matilda's lips. They found an echo in every heart, and the fair friends now almost wondered at the despondency which they had suffered to creep over them.

The breakfast hour passed more cheerfully than had been anticipated, and at the close of it, Antoine announced the arrival of their new attendant.

Matilda had looked forward to his coming with feverish impatience, as a person deputed by authority to be their protector, whom they were to look up to as their guide and adviser through coming perils. Such could be no common person, and she expected to see in the stranger one of commanding presence, of robust frame, and thoughtful countenance; but her surprise was great when Antoine introduced him.

He was a youth of slight make, and his



whole appearance of face, dress and figure was so striking as to rivet her astonishment. There was even something of feminine grace in his large dark eyes, the fire of which, as well as the deep brown tint of his complexion, spoke his Italian origin. His garb was somewhat fanciful, and as he stood before her, cap in hand, waiting her notice, he seemed some romantic youth burning for adventure, ere years had strengthened his frame.

"You are welcome, Pietro," she at length said. "You have ventured upon a difficult post."

"The more difficult," he replied, respectfully, "the more gratifying. I will endeavour, lady, to deserve your good opinion."

"You are young, Pietro, to be entrusted with such responsible duties. You know our situation?"

"I am in the confidence of the officer who selected me for this service, and am well aware of all that is required from me. Prove me, you will not find me deficient in zeal."

"You of course are acquainted, Pietro, with the route which Mr. Seymour, by the officer's direction, points out to us, at the same time

recommending an immediate departure from Milan?"

"There is scarcely a part of Italy that I am a stranger to; but I am already aware, from Antoine, that yourself and the other ladies passed the last night in anxious watchfulness. Be confident, and rest this night with better hopes."

There was something soothing, indeed cheering, in the assured tone in which Pietro spoke. It was modest, yet firm, as proceeding from one who was the organ of official authority, already roused in their defence, and working in secret for their good.

Matilda, while he was speaking, sometimes fancied that she had heard those tones before; but the impression was transitory, and it seemed a relief to all the party to be advised from a quarter on which they could repose with confidence.

This first interview won for Pietro the good will of all, and his activity and zeal in forwarding the preparations for the morrow's journey, were hourly more conspicuous. Hovering about the ladies, advising and assisting in the general arrangements, even in minute trifles, which he considered conducive to their comfort

he kept them busily employed, as if his object was to wean them from dwelling too much upon their own miseries.

It was not during the day only that his care and watchfulness were on the alert. When Mary issued from her chamber at an early hour the following morning, to attend upon the ladies, she was startled at the sight of the youth asleep on a chair in the passage connected with the rooms they occupied. Her approach awakened him.

“What, Pietro,” she exclaimed, “have you had no easier resting-place during the night than that seat?”

“I only fulfil my instructions, Mary,” was his calm reply. “My duty has made it comfortable.”

This incident, when reported to the ladies, caused equal gratification and surprise, that his instructions should be so minute and so strictly attended to by Pietro, even to his own discomfort. His discretion also seemed beyond his years, for when Matilda, with natural anxiety, sometimes questioned him about the officer’s ulterior objects, and the probability of eventual success, his reply was evasive, but encouraging. He assured her she had friends

whose zeal in her cause would never waver ; and that after such a continued career of anxiety and peril, which she had encountered with such firmness, it would be now weakness to despair when happiness was almost in her grasp.

“ They tell me, lady, that you would not hesitate in the use of fire-arms, in case of emergency. Such may arise, and it is well to be prepared.”

On the second day of their departure from Milan, the travellers came in sight of a chain of the mighty Apennines, extending in a dark rugged line along the horizon, and reached, at length, the striking town of Novi.

During their route, hitherto, Pietro had been assiduous in certain enquiries at the different towns through which they passed, and though Matilda was ignorant of their nature, yet the result always seemed satisfactory ; but at Novi it was otherwise. She did not venture to question him ; but she now noticed a gloom over his countenance, and an unwonted hesitation of manner. However, they now proceeded onwards, and Matilda remarked with surprise, that Pietro, who had occupied the seat behind the carriage, now, at his own sug-

gestion, exchanged situations with Antoine, who had hitherto accompanied them on horseback.

They now left the cultivated district behind them, and commenced slowly the ascent of the Apennines, through a narrow strait, rendered more dismal by the overhanging rocks on either side. Still, as they proceeded, the same gloomy scenery continued, the rugged pathway alternately ascending and descending, opening in wild succession from one ravine to the gorge of another, whose horrid stillness was broken only by the lonely torrent, and the voice of the drivers cheering their horses.

“Although this mountain scenery, wild as it is,” said Matilda, “does not equal the Alps in sublimity, yet as being more accessible to the foot of man, as well as intersected by these frequent defiles, it seems more likely to shelter deeds of outrage. Is it not so, Antoine?”

“There is certainly good ground for the remark,” replied Antoine; “for reports, even lately, are rife with such doings; but in former times, when the traffic with Genoa was less frequent, I have heard that these fastnesses were the resort of the worst characters, whose trade was even in blood—particularly about

the Bochetta, which is the highest ridge of these passes."

A distant report stopped farther remark. They listened as the echo shortly died away.

"A sound like that," said Antoine, "among the snowy Alps would have brought down an avalanche."

"But the cause of that report," cried Matilda, much excited, "whence can it arise?"

But even while she waited reply, her look, which seldom wandered from Pietro, was now fastened on him.

"See, what is Pietro doing?"

All eyes were turned upon him. He had dismounted to pick up something from the road, which he was closely examining.

At Antoine's call, he rode up to the side of the carriage.

"What is it, Pietro," said Matilda, "that you have just now picked up?"

"A pistol which some chance traveller has dropped. The mounting is curious and valuable. The owner must regret its loss. I have drawn the charge, and you may examine it with safety."

"Merciful Heaven," cried Madame, as she



cast her eyes upon it in Matilda's hand, "that pistol once belonged to my late husband. I know it well. I entrusted the pair to that ungrateful wretch Pierre for our defence."

"Examine it well, lady," said Pietro, astonished at her exclamation. "Be assured you are not mistaken."

"See, here is conclusive proof," replied Madame, "behold his initials."

This was indeed decisive, and every look was anxiously turned on Pietro. Matilda eagerly questioned him.

"What do you gather from this event, Pietro?"

"That this pistol has only been lately dropped, and by Pierre himself."

"What this day, Pietro?"

"Yes, lady, this day."

"Then we must be on his track," she continued, narrowly watching him as if to read his thoughts.

"It can scarcely be otherwise," was his calm reply, and his countenance was divested of its late thoughtfulness. His dark flashing eye spoke decision.

"But that report we just now heard, whence comes it, Pietro?"

"I know these wild passes well, and the sound is certainly startling."

"I recollect," said Matilda, "the officer of police at Milan alluded to some ruin among these mountains. Are we near the site?"

"There are lonely ruins scattered about, lady; but we must hasten forward."

It was evident to the whole party he wished to evade the question, and their feelings were roused to intense anxiety.

They had now penetrated into the heart of the Apennines, and, at length, approached the little town of Voltaggio, at the foot of the Bochetta.

A short distance from the town was a solitary inn; and when Pietro reached the turn from the main road, which led to it, he stopped and examined the ground, as if looking for a track of wheels, then signalling to Antoine to descend, he gave him his horse, and after entrusting him with a hasty message to the ladies, that he should shortly rejoin them at Voltaggio, he disappeared up the inn road, yet so suddenly altered in external appearance that Antoine, as he gazed after him, wondered at the change.

The mountain mists, which had hitherto obscured the face of day, now suddenly dispersed, and the western sun shone bright and beautiful as the carriage turned into the inn-yard of Voltaggio, and they welcomed, with pleasure, the cheerful appearance and internal comforts, after their dreary and fatiguing travel.

Here Madame, after partaking of a slight refreshment, felt herself so indisposed, that she retired for an hour's rest previous to their onward journey to Genoa; but before the lapse of that time, she became so restless and feverish that, at length, Matilda considered it prudent that, on her account, they should proceed no farther that day.

Indeed the event of finding the pistol, recalled so painfully to Madame's memory the sad events of other days, that the shock rendered quiet indispensable.

Repeated inquiries had been made about Pietro, who was still absent. Matilda could not shake off her boding fears, that all was not right, and that it was no common matter that could thus detain their youthful adviser and protector, whose faithful services had been hitherto so unremitting.

It must be some unexpected emergency that prevented his return, for the sudden transformation of his dress, as reported by Antoine, strengthened her fears, that he was engaged in some perilous adventure. These thoughts became so oppressive, she could not rest. She mounted the lofty terrace walk in the little garden behind the inn, and wistfully looked towards the spot where Pietro had so suddenly left them, but the view was too confined.

The winding road was intercepted by lofty, naked rocks, broken into narrow defiles, affording scanty glimpses into their dark bosoms. This continued suspense was intolerable, and she, at length, decided to set out and endeavour to glean some intelligence herself, and communicating her intentions to Emily, who was in attendance on Madame, she started, in company with Louise, followed by Antoine.

Before they left Milan, Pietro had strongly recommended to Antoine, and renewed his advice at every opportunity, always to have his weapons not only ready for use, but about his person, particularly during the coming expedition. He was thus prepared, at the present moment, and it may not, probably, be a matter of surprise, that the caution he gave to Ma-

tilda, on the same subject, was not forgotten. They passed through the garden gate, and descending a broken flight of steps cut out of the rock, they came to a small wood of stunted fir, through which a torrent tumbled from the heights above, which they crossed by a wooden bridge, and, at length, reached a narrow rugged pathway, which led, according to Antoine's representations, to the lonely inn. They proceeded onwards, scarcely venturing a remark, for their thoughts lay too deep for utterance.

Louise well understood the bewildering fears that agitated her companion, and felt that no sacrifice on her part could be too great, if she could only assist in ensuring to her that happiness she so well deserved.

The sincere and sisterly kindness also, she had herself received from her, served to rivet her attachment, and, at the present perilous crisis, she feared not for herself; she had but one wish, one burning desire, that she might prove her devoted sympathy in her cause. She shuddered at the recollection that she had been so long linked with characters to whom robbery and murder had been long familiar, whose apparent kindness to herself was dictated by

selfishness alone, and that she might, at last, have been cast away, as a worthless weed, ruined in body and soul.

The link between them was snapped for ever.

"Antoine seems more than usually on the alert," suddenly said Louise; "his eyes are everywhere."

"Every little incident may now," replied Matilda, "be important. If I had not unshaken confidence in him and our youthful protector, I should feel utterly helpless. Even now, though I may be in the very jaws of peril, there is more calm confidence in my heart, than when brooding inactive at the inn."

Antoine, who had preceded them, now stopped. The lonely inn was before them. He recommended that he should himself go forward, and make the necessary inquiries, and that they should wait his return. They watched his slow descent till he reached the building, and from their elevated position they could see into the interior of the inn-yard, though themselves screened from observation.

How long seemed the lagging minutes dur-



ing Antoine's absence! Eye and ear were now strained to the utmost.

"See, see," Louise suddenly exclaimed, pointing to the inn-yard, "'tis the very same. I cannot be mistaken."

"To what do you allude, Louise?" said Matilda, startled at her strong excitement.

"That travelling carriage, there! 'tis Madame's, the very carriage in which we used to journey from place to place."

"Can it be!" cried Matilda, "then she herself must be within those walls, and probably the impostor also."

Her heart almost throbbed to bursting.

"Have I then found you at last, my enemy!" was her exulting cry.

Her eyes flashed fire. She grasped one of the pistols beneath her cloak, and would have rushed forward.

"Be calm, dear lady," said Louise, seizing her arm, "one precipitate step on your part may involve us all. Wait Antoine's return."

But this caution had probably been unavailing, had not Antoine been seen issuing through a low porch, from the yard. He was not alone, but his companion walked quickly onward,

while Antoine turned to join them, and his thoughtful look announced tidings of importance.

“There are stirring matters afloat, ladies. The self-styled Count and his wife reached that inn this day at noon. She was so alarmingly ill on her arrival, that she was instantly put to bed, and the inmates of the house report that a scene of severe distress on her part took place between them, during which she appeared to be anxiously beseeching him not to attempt some threatened deed of violence. Soon after he started from the inn with his servant, leaving her in an alarming state.”

“But for what cause, Antoine; and where can he be gone?”

“They left on two strong mules for a solitary building, half in ruins, which they say belongs to the Count, about a league off, in some wild district of the Apennines, difficult of access, where deeds of darkness may be done, and the world no wiser. His servant, it was noticed, carried both spade and pickaxe.”

Matilda shuddered.

That servant was, doubtless, Pierre, and something dreadful was in contemplation.

“But where is Pietro?” cried she, in wild impatience, “why comes he not?”

“Pietro reached the inn shortly after the departure of the Count and his man, when the scene, which occurred in the wife’s chamber, was in everybody’s mouth, so that the intelligence he wanted, he readily acquired. Indeed, he suspected, when he so abruptly parted from me, that the very loneliness of the inn might induce the Count to stop there, rather than in the heart of the town, it being clear, from the finding of the pistol, that he was travelling that road. And his suspicions are well founded. But Pietro has a more intimate knowledge of matters from sources which are only open to few, and of which he may be properly not communicative. Thus far I know. He fell in with an old acquaintance of the gipsey tribe, one who is familiar with these wild mountains and the Count’s ruined dwelling, and had accidentally, in crossing a rugged pass, with another of his tribe, stumbled upon master and man on their secret expedition. They were unsuspecting of his being so near, and their conversation was so open and undisguised, and of such terrible import, that he

hastened for help to pursue and counteract their fearful threats. What they were, I know not, but, doubtless, such as honest men would tremble at. Pietro heard the gipsy's story, and started, with him, in pursuit of these wretches to prevent the threatened mischief."

"God's blessing speed him," exclaimed Matilda. "Their daggers may even now be at the hearts of our friends. I must not linger here. Yet could he set off without relieving our suspense?"

"Oh, no, lady. He sent Morcar, the gipsy's companion, and who is now waiting my return behind yon clump of firs, round by the hotel, to acquaint you, not to be alarmed on account of his lengthened absence. The message he delivered to Mary, and, without another word, hastened to rejoin Pietro and his comrade, but, fortunately, returned by this lonely inn for some article he had left there. Who can this Pietro be, who is obeyed so obsequiously even by these wandering gipsies, and who evinces courage and talent beyond his years?"

"And it is all for me, Antoine," she said, in a calm, resolute tone. "The business is

mine, so should the peril be, and never will I shrink from it."

"Oh, return with this young lady to the hotel," replied Antoine, alarmed at her excited manner. "The matter in hand is more fit for men."

"No farther parley, Antoine. Conduct Louise to the hotel with all speed, and I shall forthwith join your comrade, whose restless movements speak impatience. Return to us quickly."

"Dear Matilda," cried Louise, "no power on earth shall tear me from your side! I will not turn back, but will share the danger, willingly and cheerfully."

Opposition was useless.

Antoine, in silent amazement at all he had witnessed, preceded them till they reached the spot where the gipsey was in waiting. He testified no surprise at the presence of the ladies, nor when he understood their determined purpose, though he scanned them closely, yet not with repulsive curiosity but with a mournful interest in his swarthy features, as if he was already aware of their sad history.

This was Matilda's idea, and it carried con-

solation with it, as it saved distressing explanation.

"You must be our pilot, Morcar," said Matilda.

"Aye lady," was his reply; "but have you not undertaken a too hazardous enterprize?—one that will task your powers too roughly?"

"Have you a wife, Morcar?"

"Aye, and we love each other."

"Suppose, Morcar, your life were at stake, would your wife stop to calculate the danger of saving you? No, Morcar, she would attempt it, at all hazards."

"By the mass," muttered Morcar, to himself, "a woman of mettle—quick and resolute as she is beautiful. Lady," he said, "you have answered well; but you must prepare for some arduous climbing. We must avoid the common track, but not wholly lose sight of it, as we must not throw a chance away."

"Lead on, good Morcar; when either of us require your help, we will tell you. These mountain solitudes seem familiar to you."

"Aye, lady, as the home of my childhood."

"But not so dear, Morcar?"



"I love them, because the very air breathes liberty and independence."

"But if report speaks true, deeds have been done here which are best shrouded in darkness."

"Such tales are common. Men like the Count, whose game is played in the busy world, would scarce set foot here except to hide some foul play. They talk of dungeons in that gloomy ruin of his, whence midnight screams have scared the belated traveller."

Matilda gasped for breath, yet with a sort of desperate courage, she ventured to continue the subject, as fraught with such thrilling interest.

"You know the Count well, Morcar?"

"Once upon a time, lady. He was wont to use us for his own purposes; but his biddings became too dubious for honest men to meddle with, and his treatment of us so scurvy that he has often provoked our hostility, though as yet we have had no regular outbreak."

There was something in this speech that smote chill to her heart.

"Is his place a mere ruin, as reported, Morcar?"

"It was once a castle of great strength, in

the domestic wars of Italy. To a stranger, it now appears a mass of ruin; but one of the towers he has patched up, and placed an old crone in charge—a little withered hag, that seems coeval with the building, yet surprisingly active, and his willing tool in all his villainies.”

“But not the only one, Morcar.”

“He is never in want of wretches ready to do his bidding, and whose silence he ensures by bribery.”

“Surely Pietro will be on his guard, or he may rush heedlessly into danger, and our slow progress may prevent our timely help.”

“Fear not for Pietro, lady; with all his boldness, he is prudent. Yet,” he added, thoughtfully, “I would not that any harm should happen to him;” and his attention was quickly drawn elsewhere.

Their progress was necessarily slow; the broken track, scarcely perceptible except by practised eyes, winding upwards and at times impeded by trunks of fallen pines or masses of rock from the heights above. It required more than common nerve to follow their guide, at times along the dizzy edge of dark abysses, their footing on a level with the tops of the

gigantic trees that, like black pyramids, rose from below.

Matilda was hurried along by a powerful influence which she could not controul. The present stupified her, the future bewildered her, as there was no defined plan of action to regulate her movements. How would all this end!

She watched Morcar's movements with intense anxiety, having few opportunities of reading his features, as, from the nature of the ground, they were compelled to follow one another; and even with Louise, who was close behind her, she could hold but little parley; and when she occasionally gained a glimpse of her countenance, she noticed strong indications of that severe fatigue which was now sensibly stealing over herself.

Suddenly, Morcar stopped.

"Rest awhile, ladies. I have noticed some living thing moving quickly among yonder rocks in the distance. I must satisfy myself better respecting it before we proceed."

They gladly leaned against the rock, in a state of exhaustion, and had now leisure to contemplate the mountain scenery before them.

They could not survey it without awe. All was wild, majestic solitude—a chaos of of naked

rocks, piled one above another, and rent at intervals into dark, deep ravines. The world and its puny cares seemed wholly excluded from this region of silence and sublimity; but even here man dared to intrude, not impelled by feelings of admiration and wonder, but to profane its secret recesses with his unhallowed deeds, as if blindly anxious to hide from his fellow men what he ventured to expose at the very shrine of divinity. Yet even this scene of terrific grandeur looked beautiful, partially lighted up by the smiles of the setting sun.

The evening haze was slowly settling over the whole; but through the deep ravines that faced the west, the level rays poured a flood of startling lustre, tinting the rocks beyond with a rosy hue, and softening the rugged features around to the resemblance of a fairy palace.

Their meditations were interrupted by the voice of Morcar.

"By the mass, 'tis she herself, the old crone! See how nimbly she clears the rocks, like some imp of darkness."

Even yet Matilda could not distinguish the figure, and when, at last, she succeeded, the object seemed one of the monkey tribe skipping from rock to rock.

Morcar watched the figure some moments in silence.

"I am now satisfied," he at length said, "her route is towards the ruin, which we shall shortly discover if the gloom prevent us not. Her business is of no common importance from her unwonted speed. It is indeed a lucky meeting, and I must intercept her."

But she seemed to come voluntarily into his toils. Unexpectedly she turned towards the foot of the rock, on which they watched her, unperceived; and Morcar hastily descending, stood suddenly before her.

"How now, gossip," was his first salutation; "have you deserted your post? or has the Count turned you off at last?"

"He knows better," she cried, with a shrill, chuckling laugh; "but let me pass you, good Morcar, my business brooks not delay."

"And mine is equally urgent, dame. We are well met, for I was on the quest for you. Can you give me a job? I care not for the quality if it only help to wipe off tavern scores."

"You and your fellows are too squeamish for me. A little blood makes you faint."

“Not so, good dame; a round payment with me silences all scruples.”

“Well, on those terms, I have a job for you; but it is immediate. Have you your weapons about you? Are you alone?”

“Some of our fellows are prowling about, but none are with me. My weapons are all ready, and as thirsty for employment as their master. Now, as we understand each other, of what nature is the job?”

“The Count’s going over the seas, as those blood-hounds, the police, are after him, and his life’s not one moment safe. He has a troublesome customer in the tower yonder that must first be got rid of. Dead men tell no tales, and this fellow knows too much of the Count and his doings, to give him the least hope of mercy.”

“Who is he? Cannot you bribe him to silence?”

“Were he one of your breed, Morcar, such might be done; but he is proof against bribery—a sturdy, honest Irishman, that knows not what fear is. I’ve been on search for the old hand that does these jobs for the Count. He has ever been punctual before, and his ab-



sence makes all wrong. It is, however, a lucky chance for you, Morcar."

"And what's to become of you, dame, when you lose your master?"

"Oh, he promises to take me with him, and to make a lady of me," said the simpering crone; "and I've not been idle myself in preparing for a rainy day."

"Take you with him, simpleton," cried Morcar, laughing. "He is more likely to leave your old bones rotting in some half-made grave among these savage rocks, where you may rest in peace, if the birds of prey don't disturb you."

"Surely you cannot think so, Morcar," said the startled crone.

"Think so, I were an ass to think otherwise; and as for your bright heaps, how will he enjoy himself in foreign parts over the pleasures they will procure him, and laugh at the easy gullibility of the credulous fool that left him this noble legacy."

She stood silent, and confounded, her skinny lips quivered. Morcar read the cause of her emotion, and waited patiently the result.

"Morcar," at length she said, "my sus-

picious are roused. Many circumstances rise up that give colour to your assertions. It is, it must be so, I am his dupe; but it is not too late to baffle him. I swear revenge."

"But how, poor helpless woman?"

"How?" exclaimed the exasperated bel-dame. "Is he not in my power? Do I not know all his secrets, all his plans, and dares he to mock me? The first piece of coin subtracted from that heap which he is so eager to clutch, and already considers his own, shall be expended in a rope to hang him. I swear revenge."

The whole of the conversation which had taken place had been overheard by the party on the overhanging rock, and it may well be imagined with what painful interest they listened to it. Their fate seemed suspended on every word that was uttered, they did full justice to the adroitness displayed by Morcar, and they continued their attention with breathless anxiety.

"I feel your wrongs, good dame," said Morcar, "and you shall not find me slow in aiding your revenge. I know some parties whom the Count has deeply injured, who would purchase your services at any price, and enable you to

live in splendor all your days, and be undisputed mistress of the Tower, if you prefer it."

She eagerly demanded explanation, and Matilda, to her astonishment, listened to a brief, affecting account of the sufferings she herself, as well as Madame, had undergone, from the persecutions of the Count, and the spirited measures in progress to bring him to judgment.

"Oh, that the young English lady were here," cried the excited woman; "I have heard of her beauty, her energy, and, guilty as I am, have felt my withered heart glow at the mention. In her cause, I might redeem the past."

"She is near us—she has overheard all."

"Can it be? Yet it is no time for mockery, and time presses. Lead me to her."

In a few moments, they reached the listeners above. Even Morcar was surprised at the sudden change that had come over his companion. The fiendish, selfish spirit so natural to her, seemed wholly gone, and every look, word, and movement, were instinct with some determined purpose. She peered intently on Matilda's face, who turned almost in disgust from the survey.

"My poor child," she said, in tones that

spoke feeling, "report has described thee truly. So young, so delicate, this is no fit place for such as thee. But a change is at hand. I have sworn revenge."

"Tell me quickly," cried Matilda. "You stated that some unfortunate victim of the Count's hatred is now confined in the tower, and on the eve of being murdered. Is his name Dennis?"

"The same; but I mean to save him."

"Thanks, thanks, my kind friend; but are there no others whom the Count still detains in confinement?"

"Not here. None are removed to the tower except those whose doom is sealed. The death-scream is unnoticed here. But we must be brief. See you the blaze on the top of the tower yonder? It is a signal for my return. There is mischief afloat."

"Stay one moment," cried Morcar; "two of my comrades left the roadside Inn, this afternoon, for the tower, with no friendly feelings towards the Count. Have you seen or heard of them?"

"Nothing; the Count himself only arrived about noon, with that lily-hearted fellow, Pierre, who half repents his present trade, and

was it not for fear of his life would long ago have deserted the Count. The Count's arrival is always the proof of some serious matters in hand which must be promptly settled. Such is the case now; the final removal of Dennis, his own flight by sea, this night from Genoa; besides other—but you hear that shot? Quick, or we may be too late.”

She led the way, followed by Morcar, and the rest in succession. Another shot was heard, the light on the tower was now more distinctly seen, as the mists of evening gradually prevailed and the feelings of all were excited to the utmost. Even the two fair companions lost all sense of the fatigue that was gradually unfitting them for farther struggle. They had no opportunity for converse, but the look they exchanged, was full of animated hope from the sudden alteration which had taken place in their prospects. Matilda's heart beat with awakened confidence in the superintending care of Providence, and she felt that she had been guilty of ingratitude, in suffering that confidence to be for one moment weakened. The old hag awhile preceded them in silence, but suddenly when the track allowed it, she summoned Morcar to her side, to whom she developed her

plan of future operations, not a word of which was lost on Matilda. They now reached the edge of a narrow ravine, and before them was the solitary tower, perched upon the steep declivity opposite. It seemed to have formed part of a building, anciently of large extent, as low dilapidated walls ran along the brow of cliff, with here and there the remains of a gateway. Evening was closing in, and the expiring flames on the summit of the tower, flashed fitfully, partially lighting up its gloomy features. They listened, but all was still; yet through the loop-holes in the tower, a light was seen at intervals, as from some one descending within. Their guide led them down the rugged descent, selecting a path, or rather a fissure in the rock, which concealed them from observation, and before they issued into the open space, she cautioned them to cross to the opposite side by pairs, as prying eyes might be about, and if seen, it might be supposed she was returning with the man butcher. The caution was necessary, as when she reached the nearest rock with Morcar, a low whistle was heard, which she answered in the same manner. No one yet appeared, and she skirted the outer wall, till she reached a gateway,



within which was an arched, ruinous cavern, where she desired Morcar to remain concealed and wait her return. She had scarce crossed the court to reach the tower, when the imposter Count himself appeared, excited with liquor.

“Well met, my beautiful Hebe,” was his familiar salutation, “are you returned at last? Have you been buying silks and satins for your coming career of a lady, instead of attending to the comforts of the poor Irishman. His grave is dug, and he is still living. Oh, you shall queen it nobly in foreign parts, after we have made all straight here. We have been already fingering your money heaps. Come, quick, my angel, where’s the butcher? The grave will hold two, if need be.”

And the monster laughed. The heart of the old hag heaved indignant at this address. It spoke volumes, and she could scarce repress the feelings that prompted her to take instant vengeance on the staggering traitor who had thus heedlessly confirmed her worst fears. But she was already roused to a sense of her personal safety, and now more determined than ever upon revenge.

“All is prepared,” she calmly replied, “for

the obstinate Irishman. In ten minutes he shall be effectually released from his earthly prison. But where is Pierre?"

"Almost as sober as I am. We have been drinking to the health of two naughty birds we have caged without trouble. Indeed they walked into our pits with their eyes open. But Pierre don't know of your return. I caught a sight of you, and the butcher, as you crossed from the other side."

He turned away with a satanical laugh, every note of which added fuel to her burning hopes of revenge. Eager for the crisis, she hurried into the tower, and there found, as she expected, a cloak which the butcher had, by accident, left behind him on a previous visit. With this, she hastened back to Morcar, bade him fling it over him, and follow her. On their return to the tower, which she boldly entered with Morcar, they encountered Pierre.

"Now fellow," she said to him, "hast thou recovered heart? If thou had'st only proper pluck, I might have been saved all this tramp. Hand me the dungeon keys, as my companion is in a hurry, and get his wages ready, as he has a long journey before him."

"Gently, sweet mother, you must first see his grave. Our kind and worthy master has ordered it to contain two."

"Yes, he has already told me so, but who is to share it, thou or me? Art thou still blind? Knows't thou not that such cowards as thee are of no use to him, and that he is resolved to wind up the account with thee before he goes beyond sea. Thou wilt sleep comfortably with the Irishman."

Pierre stood paralyzed at her confident tone. If the threat was true, he was only warned in time, but was it well founded? He handed her the keys, almost unconscious of the act, and bewildered by the precarious situation in which he was placed. There was no time for deliberation, the voice of his master calling him by name, roused him from his painful reverie, without, however, easing him of his terrors.

In the meantime, the old woman, followed silently by Morcar, was hastening to her act of mercy. She had almost reached the stone steps that led to the dungeon beneath, when the sound of voices, as in revelry, startled her. It came from a half-furnished room, set apart for the Count, in his occasional visits.

She had left all quiet, and these revellers,

whoever they might be, had arrived during her absence. As her own plans might be thwarted it was necessary to solve the mystery.

Bidding Morcar conceal himself in a dark recess which she pointed out, she boldly entered the room.

"How now, my pretty maid," cried her master, who was seated at a table, with three companions, "is the deed so quickly done?"

"Is the grave to be filled up immediately?" she asked.

"Not yet – not yet," muttered her master; "but take this, my faithful friend," he said, offering her a full goblet, "and drink farewell to the old tower, and a welcome to future joys."

A general laugh followed this remark.

She refused it, suspicious of its contents, and as she turned away, recognized his companions as the most fearless desperados, ever ready to do his bidding.

He had, therefore, unexpected help at hand, which might render her own plans more difficult of execution; but she could not now turn back: her own life might be the forfeit.

She hastily rejoined Morcar, and explained to him that their enemies were suddenly in-

creased in number, thereby adding to the difficulties they had to grapple with.

"It is necessary that you should be well armed, Morcar."

"If I was not already so, this cloak would stand my friend. In its pocket I find not only a dagger, but pistols, ready for action."

"It is well," she said; "for there may be some friends of yours that will require them—I allude to the two that left the roadside inn before you."

"Speak—where are they?"

"In confinement close to the tower, not far from you. Outside the tower is a sort of vault, the entrance to which is open, so that any casual stranger might consider it unwatched and untenanted, and enter without suspicion, when suddenly, by secret agency, a door drops from above, and closes all egress. It is there your friends are caught and imprisoned; but I shall forthwith release them. By the time you have prepared Dennis for the change," she added, unlocking the ponderous door, "I shall be ready to join you with the two caged birds, as my overwise master calls them, when we shall be more than a match for our enemies; and who then shall fill the new-made grave?"

While these important events were going forward, who can speak the painful suspense, amounting, at times, to agony, which the fair companions were compelled to endure, while, with Antoine, they continued under the concealment of the rock.

They watched the old woman and Morcar cross the ravine, they had heard the signal whistle, and her corresponding reply, and waited impatiently some result, well knowing their aged friend would not be idle.

Minutes passed, lagging like hours, and they looked in vain for the expected communication. What if the old woman's plans were discovered, and she now a prisoner, with Morcar, in the power of her merciless enemy ! The very possibility of such a reverse almost shook her reason.

"Speak, dear Matilda!" said Louise: "I am terrified at your silence. Tell me your thoughts."

"Hear you not, Louise ! Those faint sounds from the tower are again repeated ! What can they mean ?"

"They do not seem to proceed from anger," said Antoine ; "I think there is some carousing going forward."



“Carousing, Antoine!” said Matilda. “If so, it bodes ill for us.”

“The blessed Virgin protect us!” cried Louise.

And a gloomy pause ensued, which was broken by Antoine.

“Shall I go forward, lady, and endeavour to procure intelligence?”

“That may not tend to mend matters, good Antoine,” replied Matilda. “If our enemies are successful, your capture would enhance their triumph; but we should be left defenceless.”

Suddenly, a shot was heard—a second—then a quick succession, mingled with loud voices and increasing uproar.

“Oh, joyful sounds!” exclaimed Matilda, tearing open her cloak and grasping a pistol. “She has not failed us at last. Let us forward—the struggle is begun!”

Antoine rushed on eagerly to lead the way. They crossed the ravine, reached the opposite rocks; but the fair companions in vain strove to master the ascent so as to keep pace with Antoine.

The thickening gloom bewildered them; still they struggled on, and gained the summit;

they turned to the right, slowly skirting the outside of the ruined castle, till they reached the same gateway through which the old woman had already passed.

The noise at intervals continued as they entered the arch, and Matilda, fatigued with the oppressive support she had been compelled to give Louise, placed her upon a stone seat and sat exhausted beside her.

There was little time for deliberation.

"Follow me, Pierre!" shouted a voice. "Our foes are too much for us. The old hag is at their head."

Louise sprang to her feet.

"He is upon us, Matilda. It is the Count!"

"The moment is then come for our meeting," cried Matilda, and rushed into the courtyard, followed by Louise.

There were lights visible in the tower, quick steps were rapidly approaching, but from what quarter, they could not ascertain.

Suddenly Louise was seized by a strong arm.

"What," cried the Count, "am I beset on all sides?"

“Unhand me, wretch,” exclaimed Louise, vainly struggling to disengage herself.

“What is it you, my lost nightingale?” and he grasped her more firmly. I have now a peace-offering for my angry wife yonder.”

“Villain,” cried Matilda, whom he had not yet observed, owing to her dark cloak, “release the girl; thy hour is come.”

“Again a woman’s threat; impede me not, poor helpless fool. I will not be trifled with.”

“Did I not tell thee,” cried Matilda, “thy hour was come. Again I warn thee. Release the girl. Thou shalt not pass,” and her finger was on the trigger.

“Stay then, poor obstinate trifler, if thou wilt have it so, thou shalt be gratified.”

And he dropped his burthen; but it was to release a pistol from his girdle, when Matilda, anticipating his intention, fired, and her enemy fell with a scream at her feet.

The tread, as of people running, some bearing torches, amid confused cries, echoed throughout the court-yard. Two or three leaped over the ruined wall, and the Count’s name was distinctly heard as the universal object of pursuit. Familiar voices now reached

Matilda's ear, as she stood almost stunned with the suddenness of the stupendous event which had occurred, and by her own hand.

And now they crowded round her, in eager congratulations upon her safety ; but as yet ignorant of the Count's fate. All questions were at once suspended when Matilda pointed to the bleeding wretch on the ground, and the torches gleamed on the ghastly features of the Count.

He seemed to rouse all his failing energies to a last effort ; he raised himself to a sitting posture, resting on one arm for support, and, with clenched teeth, and starting eye-balls, proving his united agony of mind and body, he would have grappled with her, had he been able, but he sank under the attempt.

" Foiled at last, by a woman !" was his dying burst of furious despair. " Speak, who art thou ?"

" Hear me then," said Matilda, in tones of awful severity that thrilled the surrounding gazers. " Dost thou recollect the generous, the confiding Dormer, whom thy arts seduced to the gaming table, and who was treacherously robbed, and basely murdered by thee ? Dost thou remember that noble-minded youth,

Edward Mortimer, who would have rescued his murdered friend, but came too late to the scene of blood, and was himself apprehended, and consigned to a living death, branded as a felon and murderer, for that very deed of thine? I was his affianced wife. When the world pronounced him guilty, I asserted his innocence, and, at our last parting, in his prison cell, I vowed, on my knees, to devote myself to the holy task of proving the injustice of his sentence, to trace out thee, the real murderer, and never relax in the pursuit till I had thee in my power, and delivered thee, alive or dead, to the ministers of justice. My vow was holy, and Heaven has prospered it. Vengeance has reached thee, and thy doom is sealed. Thy soul is black with crime. Thy brother's unprotected widow, even her thou would'st have murdered. Now prepare to meet thy God, and breathe one prayer for mercy, if thou can'st."

"Who shall fill the new-made grave now?" cried the old hag, with a chuckling laugh, as she stood beside.

The Count heard her.

"I shall not die yet; I shall disappoint ye all;" and, with the frenzied howl of a demon,

he sprang, with awful suddenness, forward, and fell dead at Matilda's feet.

A general shudder followed this fearful spectacle; but other cares soon pressed for observance.

"Accept this kiss, dear Miss Godfrey," said a well-known voice, "as pure as a devoted brother can give a beloved sister."

She grasped Seymour's hand; but there was no time for farther interchange.

Other parties pressed forward, among the foremost, Pietro, who stood before her with naked head, having lost his hat during the fray, and with laughing countenance and dishevelled tresses, more meet for the gentler sex.

Matilda was bewildered, as the flaming torches fully revealed the unexpected change.

"Has the gipsey fortune-teller, fair lady, been correct in her prophecy? Was I right in my prediction, that the death-blow which overtook the guilty one, would come from thy hand?"

"Good Fanchon," replied Matilda, who at once recognized her, "you and your friends shall not find me ungrateful. I can scarce cancel the debt I owe you."



“My own wants are limited, lady; but even my exertions, on your behalf, would have been futile, but for the zeal and activity of Balfour, this youthful candidate for your favor that stands beside me. Even the police might have been at fault without his intelligence and knowledge of the Count’s whereabouts.”

“And it’s only God’s truth, Fanchon,” cried another friendly voice. “And so we are none of us killed, at last, but that mighty big thief that lies there. And there’s my young mistress, not one of her blessed bones broken after all; and there’s Miss Louise too, as hearty as ever. Won’t she sing like a lark now she can fly where she likes, without asking leave. And there’s—no, by the powers,” he continued, mournfully, “I don’t see Mary. Blessings on her little heart, she would be glad to welcome her old companion again.”

“And you shall soon see her again, good Dennis,” said Matilda, “and she will indeed rejoice at your safety.”

Farther discourse was interrupted by the officer.

“Ladies, for your own sakes, we must suspend these congratulations. Your powers have

been severely taxed, and you require repose, and must remove from this scene of blood. The task now is mine."

He summoned Balfour.

"Balfour, I have selected two men; accompany them, instantly, to the road-side inn. Make prisoner this false Count's wife, put a seal on all her effects, and allow no intercourse with her except through yourself. If she be escaped, for ill news flies apace, pursue her, and bring her back to the inn, where wait farther orders."

"Scarce was the last word uttered, when Balfour disappeared.

"Our work is not yet done," said Matilda. "I hear again the voices of restored friends; but I listen in vain for that of my dearly loved relative Charles."

"I am actively pursuing information," replied the officer, "which I am sanguine will lead to a happy result. Intelligence pours upon me, increasing in interest; but from Pierre, whom Mr. Seymour and myself arrived just in time to intercept in his flight, I expect most decisive testimony. He is paralyzed with fear, and anxious to win favor by voluntary confession. I shall have to draw up an official ac-

count of these important occurrences, and the various evidences connected with them, for the superior authorities, and the conversations I have already had, especially with Balfour, who was an accomplice with the Count, in the murder of Dormer in London, fully warrant me in asserting my conviction that the innocence of Mr. Edward Mortimer will be clearly established."

Matilda could not speak; every thought of her heart was absorbed in silent gratitude to that Being who had thus mercifully led her, step by step, through so many severe trials.

She flung herself upon Louise's neck, and their burning tears of thankfulness flowed together. The officer respected this burst of feeling, and interrupted them not till Seymour joined them.

"All is ready, ladies, for your departure to the hotel where your friends must be anxiously looking for you. A couple of stout mules, and attendants with torches, another hour's fatigue, or a little more, and you will enjoy that rest which has been so well earned."

"And you, Seymour——" cried Matilda.

"I will accompany you," was his reply, "as I may be now so well spared here."

“And to-morrow,” said the officer on parting, “we meet again.”

As they were preparing to mount, the old hag came hastily forward with a goblet of wine in her hand.

“I should ill be doing my duty, ladies, in my new dignity as mistress of this castle,” she said, with assumed importance, “if I allowed you to depart without refreshments.”

“Accept it, dear ladies,” cried Seymour; “the offer is well timed.

And it was thankfully received.

“My good friend,” said Matilda, “have you no wish to leave these wild solitudes?”

“Not if I can live in peace—and I think the gang’s now broken up. I have cause to bless my meeting with you, or my old bones might have shared the new-made grave with honest Dennis.”

Matilda shuddered.

“Your own prospects are brightened also, lady; and we may yet meet again, with every wish of your heart gratified—the holy Virgin speed it!”

“I shall often think of you,” replied Matilda; “and we may perchance meet again.”

“Aye, lady, and with the beloved youth by your side. You may yet show him over these lonely ruins, which you have so much cause to remember, and I will take care to tell him the important share you had in the dreadful scenes of the day.”

Matilda parted from her with excited feelings, yet so novel and strange that she could not resist the rush of overwhelming joy that poured into every avenue of her heart.

She heard, on every side, that she was at last approaching the sunny haven where, after her perilous voyage, she might, like the travelled dove, fold her weary wings and repose in peace.

Yes, there was foundation for this blissful anticipation, it was no airy dream, and she was lost in visions of coming happiness, from which she was roused by the voice of Seymour, talking to the guide who was selected to precede them, from his familiarity with this mountainous district.

For a moment, she almost started at the awful loneliness and sublimity of the scenery around her. The gloom which envelopped it, only partially relieved by the flashing torches, as they slowly threaded the narrow defiles,

clothed the shadowy cliffs above with terrific grandeur. Yet, she felt no alarm. There was sunshine within her, and it was even with a thrill of delight that she watched the broad and fitful gleams of summer lightning which at intervals flung forward, into bold relief, their majestic features, investing night with beauties peculiarly its own.

“How striking—how imposing, at this hour, is the mountain scenery around us,” said Matilda, as Seymour walked by her side. “The sight almost weans me from myself; but do not think me ungrateful for not sooner recurring to the past, and to the eminent services you so cheerfully rendered me when a sick bed was more fitting for you.”

“Refer not to that, dear Miss Godfrey. The excitement has been my best physician. The happiness that now awaits you, how richly do you deserve; and how little merit do I claim for my trifling aid. But what owe I not to you? You have been my good angel, and when I was sunk in low, debasing pursuits, you restored me to the dignity of a man. Yes, I am now your adopted brother, and even Louise smiles forgiveness upon me. Oh, what



a tale I shall have to tell my poor injured wife!"

"Would Charles were here," said Matilda, "to hear you talk thus. The officer gives more than hope that he may even to-morrow be restored to us."

"And trust in his assurance, dear Miss Godfrey; his profession seems supported by enchantment, and to have connecting links everywhere. He derives intelligence from sources, to me, unaccountable. Even when we reached Genoa, where we posted like lightning from Milan, in order to intercept the Count who, he told me, had already engaged his passage from that port in a foreign vessel. In the crowded street we seemed alone; but his emissaries were everywhere. The vessel was to start at daylight, and berths had been already secured, the captain said, for the Count, his wife, and one servant; but a hint from the officer, that the authorities were in search of this Count, and that to receive him on board might peril the safety of himself and his vessel, so alarmed the captain that this avenue of escape was forthwith closed. Scarce had we left him, when my companion was signalled by

a man on the crowded quay. They retired together; but shortly separating, .

“ ‘It seems,’ said the officer ‘this arch-villain has not yet reached Genoa. He travelled from Milan by a circuitous road, little frequented, along which we tracked him. He must suddenly have turned aside, and I conjecture, to some ruinous tower among the Apennines, respecting which there are startling reports; but in a few minutes, I shall know the truth.’

“ And scarce five minutes had elapsed, when another secret sign of free-masonry summoned him to the private speech of a passer-by.

“ ‘I was right,’ he said, on rejoining me; ‘we overshot the runaway, who suddenly turned off when he reached the Apennines, in the direction of the ruin, where he has summoned some hired bravos to meet him, evidently for some desperate purpose. Moreover, I learn his wife is lying at some way-side inn, alarmingly ill. We must hurry back, and beard the savage in his den, ere it be too late.’

“ His frame seemed made of iron, so insensible was he to fatigue, though I must own, I trust without disparagement to myself, that

had it not been for the excitement, and the all-absorbing anxiety I felt at this crisis, my own, already weakened strength must have given way. We hurried from Genoa, where wakeful eyes were still on the watch. It appeared that there was an additional spur to the activity of the police in apprehending the Count, as he was more than suspected of being a principal agent in the wholesale robbery of a wealthy banker in Florence, not many days ago. The plunder, in money and jewels, was immense, and the officer keenly questioned the captain whether his intended passenger had secured any baggage on board. None, however, had yet reached him, but the officer was sanguine in recovering the property, owing to the vigilant and extended look out. We hastened back, and reaching the mountains, decisive intelligence awaited us. The wife's illness was confirmed, and some deed of blood was in agitation at the lonely tower, which alarmed me the more as you were in the neighbourhood, and there were vague reports that you were desperately encountering danger, being seen on foot among the rocky passes in the very jaws of this murderer's den. These reports became more consistent as we ap-

proached the ruin. Night came on, we heard the firing of shots, there was evidently some serious outbreak, the uproar grew more distinct. Two men, well armed, guided us through the gloomy solitude. Lights now gleamed from the tower and loud voices still reached us, succeeded by another shot. As we sprang up the cliffs we intercepted some fugitive hastily descending, who, on his capture, proved to be Pierre, overcome with terror. We leaped the wall. The catastrophe was over, the last shot was fired by yourself. Your merciless enemy, whose desperate career defied both God and man, the author of all your wretchedness, lay dead at your feet.'

"Oh!" replied Matilda, "never could human agency have brought about, unassisted, that connected series of events which has led to this stupendous result. My early acquaintance with madame, her unexpected connection with the destroyer of our mutual happiness, were the commencing links in this mysterious chain, and I read the arm of God throughout. I am full of bright hopes, Mr. Seymour. Even the cheerful tones of honest Dennis, who is now talking to Louise, strike sweetly on my ear, and seem an earnest of

happier days. But you have been heavily taxed as to fatigue both of mind and body and the comforts of the hotel, where our dear friends must be impatiently expecting us, will be duly welcomed by us all."

Their arrival at the hotel caused unwonted bustle, as whispers began to circulate of the bloody strife that had just occurred, but Matilda pressed within, and Emily, with a scream of joy, rushed into her arms.

"We meet again, dear Matilda, and my fears about you are at rest. Mr. Seymour, too! I hear also the cheerful voice of Dennis in his greetings with Mary. Surely I have much to hear."

They hastily retired into their private room.

"Emily," said Matilda, "I see not Madame."

"She has happily slept during your absence, of which she is not at all aware. I have watched by her bed alternately with Mary, though at intervals our anxiety about you led us to look out into the night. But, dear Matilda," she added, with a trembling voice, "amidst the welcome tones that I hear again,

there is yet one wanting; I almost fear to ask about Charles."

"Cheer thee, my love," replied Matilda, "I am assured, and from authority I am not inclined to doubt, that within the next twenty four hours, we shall hear from his own lips the account of his hair-breadth escapes. Emily, methinks we shall all yet be happy—yes all. Our fearful enemy is dead."

"Dead! do I hear aright?"

"Yes, Emily, we may once more breathe at liberty. I doubt not the news is already busily canvassed throughout the house."

Madame suddenly entered with Mary.

"Matilda, what is this that I hear? I was just awake when Mary stood by my side. What is this that she tells me? While I have been idly slumbering you have been encountering danger and death. Can it be? Is this unhappy man dead and by your hand?"

"It is true, my dear friend, his hand was already on his own pistol, in one moment I had been too late."

"May God have mercy on his guilty soul," said madame, "but tell me all."

There were others equally impatient, and



the actors in this closing tragedy entered upon a thrilling detail of all its changing scenes."

"May God have mercy upon his soul," repeated madame. "I weep not for his death. Had he escaped, he would have added to the already fearful catalogue of his crimes, but whence, save from heaven, can you have derived that presence of mind which you have shewn in every emergency, but more particularly the last?"

"Indeed," said Seymour, "the firmness displayed by Miss Godfrey is beyond all praise, and though I wish to spare her feelings, we must own it has laid a solid foundation for the brightest hopes. All is now animating and cheering. You, Madame, may now return to your villa secure from farther persecution; and as for Miss Godfrey, she will yet enjoy that happiness her heroic constancy has so well deserved. My own wishes point to England; but never will I quit you, till Charles is again restored to you."

All felt, all acknowledged his generous kindness, but none, more than Emily. She internally blessed him for his frank avowal.

"And now, ladies," he continued, "let us

not overlook the good things on that ready-furnished table, but make amends for the past, and lay in strength for the morrow."

Dennis would have come in to wait, as usual, but Mary prevented him.

"You will require some of my good nursing, Dennis, for you look terribly woe-begone."

"Faith, and like enough, Mary. It is not a trifle of flesh that I have left behind me."

"Then don't be shy, Dennis, of the good things before you, and you shall then have a comfortable bed, which may be a novelty you have not lately seen."

"Fair and softly, Mary, Have not I been already eating to oblige you, till I am half choked? But I must see the gentle folks, any how. It is my duty."

Dennis was warmly received; but his whole appearance gave sad proof of long continued suffering and privation, but the spirit was still there.

"Indeed, Dennis," at length said Matilda, "you have endured much, and all for our sakes."

"And does not that make the merrier meet-

ing now? I have been scurvily used by the heathens, and that's only truth, and Kathleen might well ask if it's my own self; but is it not all over, and the grave that was opened for Dennis, as the old hag told me, who is its tenant now? Sure and he'll rest in peace after all the turmoil he's been up to."

"Aye, good Dennis," replied Matilda, "at one time we almost despaired of seeing you again. Your disappearance was very sudden."

"Sudden," cried Dennis, "by the powers, that driver cheated me with my eyes open."

"'Dennis,' he said, the smooth-tongued chap, 'you want to oblige your master, don't you?'"

"'That's only truth,' I said."

"'Now, Dennis, I am naturally an honest lad, for my father was an Irishman, but they bribed me, Dennis, and I could not resist.'"

"My heart yearned towards him, when I heard he had Irish blood in his veins."

"'But you were wrong, any how,' I said."

"'I was, Dennis; but I'll make amends. I've seen the fellow skulking about, that tempted me. I would not finger his dirty gold now. There he is again, Dennis, peeping into

the inn-yard. Quick, Dennis, or we may lose him. How pleased your master will be when we've secured him!

"I was as eager as he was; and when he took a cloak off a peg in the room, and put it on, in order, he said, to prevent being known, I suspected nothing. We stole silently out through the gate into the public road, along which we ran in pursuit of the supposed villain, till we reached three or four men, to whom my companion, I thought, gave some private signal.

"'Dennis,' I said to myself, 'you are befooled, and right well you deserve it.'

"They pulled a cap over my head, so that I could neither see nor speak, and hurried me along for some time. At last they stopped, tied me hand and foot, and strapped me on a mule's back, and we set off again. It was rough, jolting work for Dennis, and I was as helpless as a sucking babe. I was almost bruised to a jelly, when the beast, at last, stood still. They took me off, and reared me against a rock. Now they are going to shoot me, I thought; and the green Irish turf won't cover my bones. But they soon were engaged in a

drinking bout, and their jokes flew about like wild fire.

“ ‘Help yourself, Mr. Dennis—Irishmen are naturally modest.’

“ ‘And easily gulled,’ said the driver, with a loud laugh. ‘If the Count wants to get rid of him, the terrible gulf is close by, whose depth cannot be fathomed.’

“ ‘Suppose,’ said another, ‘we toss Mr. Dennis in, he will tell us all about it, if he has the luck to get out.’

“ ‘But he must first pay our hire,’ cried a fourth. ‘By your leave, Mr. Dennis;’ and they immediately emptied my pockets; but while they were dividing the scanty plunder, some one suddenly interrupted them.

“ ‘Well met, my lads; I was searching for you; you must not loiter. Pierre is waiting for you at the lone house.’

“ ‘Sure enough it was the Count’s voice.

“ ‘And that’s honest Dennis. Unbind him hand and foot. He’s an old acquaintance, and must not be too roughly treated.’

“ ‘What’s in the wind now, I thought; but though it was mighty queer, and past my finding out, his kindness was put to the proof. I

was soon untrussed ; but there was little fear of my running away, for I could hardly stand. The Count himself removed the covering from my head, so that I could breathe freely. But what a heathenish country ! I saw nothing but rocks, not a blade of grass, not a living thing, but a large carrion bird on the height above me, that seemed to eye me as if he was already measuring my carcase for his evening supper.

“ ‘ Now give him a cup of wine,’ said the Count, ‘ and set him on the mule again, with his limbs at liberty.’ ”

“ He now left us, and we proceeded onwards for three or four hours ; but I almost forgot my fatigue, as they bandied about their tales of roguery. Mercy on me ! my hair stood on end, and they talked of absolution from the priest.

“ ‘ Softly, comrades,’ said one, ‘ we are in sight of port. Our master’s a liberal fellow, and is no niggard of his wine. He knows that hard work deserves good feeding.’ ”

“ ‘ Aye,’ said his neighbour, ‘ such work as ours, that would not suit squeamish stomachs. That job at Florence he managed well, cleaned the old banker out, scarcely left him a franc-



piece. He'll now live beyond sea like a king.'

" 'I wish he was safe on shipboard with the booty,' remarked another.

" 'He must first leave all right behind him; and there will be more blood shed; but one murder, more or less, will make no difference to the priest.'

" Pierre was ready for us at the gate of the wretched dwelling; but it was as snug as an Irish cabin inside.

" 'This is your own room, good Dennis,' said the whining hypocrite; 'a good fire, bed fit for an emperor, and no want of belly timber. It is the Count's order.'

" 'And you are to be my jailer.'

" 'Why not a jailer exactly,' stammered the poor wretch, 'a friend, if you like, good Dennis.'

" 'Then what are you trembling for in the door-way ready for a bolt, as if I was going to do you a mischief?'

" And sure enough it was so, for didn't I overhear him tell the gang, they should have bound me hand and foot, I was such a desperate dog. However, I was too tired to bandy words with him, and after a hearty supper, I

went to bed, though I heard fighting and drinking in the next room, and my throat might be cut before morning. But I woke at broad day all right, and more fit to grapple with what might happen. There was but one window, perched so high, there was no looking out, and, in spite of myself, I had but gloomy misgivings about the future. Pierre seldom left me, and after dinner, when he got pot-valiant, he ventured to begin his blarney.

"The Count's a generous master, Dennis, what might you leave him for?"

"Because I was after wishing, I said, to die peaceably in my bed."

He tried to laugh, but such a laugh.

"How do you like this wine, Dennis? I keep the key—no stint here—no mistress watching you like a cat, and as for wages, I can earn as much in a day, as the old woman gave me in a year. Am not I an altered man, Dennis?"

"By the powers, and its only true, both soul and body. Can you sleep at night without dreaming of the gallows?"

"Sure you're joking, good Dennis. You never will be as rich as I am, you are too

squeamish. Leave your canting people, and be one of us."

"And what canting people do you mean, I asked him?"

"'Why there's the old hypocrite at the villa, and those meddling English that allow him no peace. Till they are all rotting under the sod, honest men can't get their own. Be one of us again, Dennis, and my master will pay for the job, right nobly. It can be done more snugly, this time. A little poison, Dennis, and no more.'"

"I started up to fell the villain, but he was so terrified, that his chair and himself rolled to the ground together. And there he lay, the big villain, as white as a sheet. 'And arn't you a nate blackguard thus to dispose of your betters? With one grip of my fist round your throat, I could release your black soul, but it would be robbing the hangman of his due. And have you forgot poor Minet? She's already gone to her long account, but there will be a sorer reckoning for yourself by and by.'"

"For two or three days he never ventured to renew the subject, but I turned the tables upon him, and with some effect too.

"You look ill," I said, the day after the outbreak, "and faith, I'm very glad to see it, Pierre. Maybe its a sign that you want to make a clane breast of it. If so, give way at once, and cheat the devil."

" 'It is too late, this roving life suits me. I am now free, and a slave to no man.' "

"I laughed outright. 'A mighty pretty independent fellow, truly! Skulking among rocks, ashamed to look honest men in the face and mistaking every shadow for a police officer. There is no harder taskmaster than the devil, and he will leave you in the lurch, at last, if you don't get the start of him, by turning honest.' He winced at first under my lash, but latterly he was serious and thoughtful. The next day the Count came, and the bit of gleam was all over. I might have been one of his dear friends; he asked so many questions about my health and comforts; but I was broad awake this time, any how. We dined together, and they both drank like fishes, boasting over their cups of their jovial, independent life.

" 'Dennis,' at last said the Count, 'won't you be one of us?'

“Faith and it seems I’m one of you already without asking my leave.

“He looked puzzled.

“‘Dennis, let us understand one another. You have been a traitor to me, and deserve my vengeance, but I will forget all, if you will return to my service.’

“I’m thinking its a queer fancy you are taking to me, to be after putting yourself to all this trouble about one that was honestly employed elsewhere. How can a simple body like Dennis, deserve it all?”

“‘Why, to be open with you, Dennis,’ he said, looking somewhat foolish, ‘I’ve a job or two for you, which indeed Pierre has already told you of. That English girl, they call Godfrey, is reported to be very wealthy. Is it true, Dennis?’

“She has a power of money, and that’s only truth.

“‘And that conceited young blade, her cousin, they are very fond of each other?’

“I think you can very well answer that yourself.

“‘Then, if this cousin got into any serious scrape, out of which money only could release

him, she would not mind coming down handsomely.'

"Now, Dennis, I thought to myself, what is the man driving at? There must be some fresh mischief afloat.

"As he waited for an answer,

"There's two sides to a question, I said, but anyhow, she's too high-minded to desert a friend in time of need.

"So I thought, good Dennis, and I would not do so noble a girl one jot of mischief.'

"I was at my wit's end at this sudden burst of feeling.

"Now, Dennis, listen. I'm going beyond sea, never to return. You know the old woman at the villa yonder has robbed me of my just rights, which it is my determination to recover before I leave. Would any honest man be ashamed of the like, Dennis?"

"It is natural to us all, I said, to resist injustice.

"Now, Dennis, look here,' and he emptied a large bag of gold and silver on the table, 'won't it be a fine thing for you to go back to Ireland with all these shiners in your pocket, and



the whole shall be yours, if you will only assist me in recovering my own.'

"As how? I said.

"This bit of powder carries death with it. You are in her confidence. You can administer it without suspicion, and who will be the wiser, Dennis?"

"And this is to be the blood money, is it?"

"Call it not so, Dennis. It will be the means of making you happy, and the envy of all your neighbours.'

"For all the wealth of Ireland, I would not hurt a hair of her head.

"I'm not to be trifled with, Dennis. I don't mean to harm one of your English friends. Don't mistake me; it's that wicked woman whose life ought justly to answer for her misdeeds.'

"Put up your money,' I said. 'Since I left your service, I'm an altered man. There's another world after this.'

"Dennis, you seal your own doom. Mad-den me not. I will yet give you one hour to repent your folly.'

"And why give yourself the trouble

to come again? I have already answered you.'

" 'Then, you've signed your own death-warrant.'

" And he hurried away, white with rage.

" I had hardly reasoned myself into calmness, when my former conductors rushed into the room, bound me hand and foot as before, and flung me, like a bale of goods, into a covered cart. For three days I was hurried along without being allowed to breathe the air. We stopped at intervals, to change our cattle, and once a day I was supplied with a scanty meal, so that when the cart reached, at night, its destination, it was almost up with Dennis. When I was taken out, an old bel-dame came with a light and examined me.

" 'He's nearly dead already,' she cried with a chuckle; 'he'll not give us much trouble—he'll be stiff by morning.'

" They bore me down into a naked dungeon, unbound and abandoned me to my fate. I felt, however, so much ease when relieved from my fetters and the incessant jolting, that I crawled to the victuals which the old hag had left me, devoured them greedily, and being utterly exhausted, fell fast asleep in a dry corner, in

which state I continued till she woke me in the morning.

“‘It is not every man,’ she said, ‘that sleeps so soundly the first night of his visit here. Do you know why you are brought here?’

“‘And is it not yourself that are more likely to know?’

“‘You were half dead when you were brought here. You had better have died outright, for few leave this place alive—I call it the Count’s slaughter-house.’

“‘And whereabouts are we, good woman?’

“She laughed heartily as she replied.

“‘Good woman indeed!—you will know better by and bye. But ask no questions. We have room enough to give you snug quarters where no one will disturb you; but you don’t whine like some of our visitors. I like your courage, and you shall fare better for it as long as you are above ground.’

“When she went away I was gloomy enough. I was brought here to be murdered. I had, however, a larger supply of food, which kept up my strength and spirits, and I would not suffer hope to die wholly within me.

“‘I’ve news for you,’ she said this very day, hastily entering my cell; ‘the Count’s just

arrived, and Pierre with him. They have brought pick-axes and spades to dig your grave. The Count bids me say he will give you another chance for your life. What makes you so squeamish? Is it not better for a young man to live in pleasure all his days, than rot in an early grave? Would not the Count be a poltroon if he patiently submitted to be robbed of his own?"

"When a man's robbed of his own, the law's open to him. It looks queer to murder."

"You're joking, simpleton," said the laughing crone. "We've too much quicksilver about us to sleep over our work. We are our own judge and executioner. My master waits an answer."

"Let him dig my grave as soon as he likes. I may chance live yet to walk over his grave."

"The chances are, however, against you. Before the sun goes down, you will be past eating—so good luck to you!"

"I was now left alone, to prepare me, as I might, for the worst. I heard the faint strokes outside, as if they were opening my grave. I thought of Kathleen, and all my kind friends.

I walked up and down till I was giddy. I sat down in a corner, a stupor came over me, and I thought no longer. I never recovered till I was roused by some one violently shaking me.

“ ‘Up, Dennis,’ cried the voice ; ‘you are a free man—up and struggle for your life. I am your friend !’

“For the moment, I understood him not ; but few words sufficed for explanation. By the powers ! I was soon myself again. And here we all meet at last, safe and hearty ; and Irish turf may yet cover Dennis’s bones.”

This tale, so affecting in itself, but rendered more so by Dennis’s natural eloquence, was listened to throughout, with the deepest interest. It concerned all. At intervals, Madame shuddered at the fearful recital of the dangers she had escaped, and the fresh proofs of deadly hostility with which this wretched relative had pursued her to the last.

“Good Dennis,” she said, “you have suffered much for our sakes. You shall see your Kathleen again, and you shall have a snug cabin of your own, and live in comfort, after all you have gone through.”

“Not yet, not yet,” cried Dennis, with

great emotion. "We are not all here. I wish that gentleman there had been Mr. Charles—no offence, sir."

"I cannot be offended, my honest fellow," replied Seymour; "the feeling is honourable to you; but we look to your friend Charles's return before we are a day older. But now, Dennis, to bed, and recruit yourself, after all you have endured. There are others that may be glad to follow the example."

And with thankful hearts, they all soon retired, and never were more fervent prayers breathed than were that night offered up.

"Well, Dennis," said Mary, when they met next morning, "I gave you twenty-four hours for bed, and you are up as usual, as if nothing had happened!"

"Fair and softly, Mary dear; when I woke this blessed morn, I was as light as a feather. There was no knife at my throat, and instead of the old hag, croaking about starvation and murder, I am greeted with your smiling face."

"Oh, Dennis, to think of seeing you safe again!—and your story last night, Dennis! I thought of nothing else all the night through. None of the martyrs, whose history I am so



fond of reading, could suffer more than yourself."

"Why, it was bad enough, Mary, and that's only truth, and I can hardly believe it's myself that's talking to you; but think of your young mistress. If she had not stopped that big villain, he might have got clean off, and all would have had to begin over again. And, by the powers! she did not do the business by halves."

"Aye, Dennis, what presence of mind she showed at such a critical moment! As for that monster, God grant him that peace he denied us all here."

"That's charitable any how, Mary; but what do you think the old crone offered me before we parted? I ask her pardon, I mean the lady of the castle yonder."

"What, Dennis?" cried Mary, with eager curiosity.

"Young man," she said, "I took a liking to you, when you were so snugly lodged in the dungeon. I'm now mistress of this castle, with plenty of money, and if you'll only marry me, it shall all be your own, and I'll make you a fond, loving wife."

“A bold, impertinent woman! Did you not call her so, Dennis?”

“By the powers, Mary, I never insult a lady. Besides, I thought it mighty civil of her, and told her so; but that her offer came too late, as I had already a Mrs. Dennis in old Ireland. But Miss Emily, Mary! her pretty face is like an April day. She’s the only one that looks, at times, so sad and thoughtful.”

“Yes, poor girl,” said Mary; “but when Mr. Charles comes back, it will make all right there. But where can he be, Dennis? Lord be good to us! that terrible Count did his work by wholesale.”

This conversation took place in the sitting-room, while Dennis was arranging the breakfast table, previous to the morning appearance of the family, and Mary was now turning to leave the room, when she uttered a faint scream.

“Werner! welcome—a thousand times welcome.”

The greeting was indeed cordial.

“Judging by your looks, Dennis,” said Werner, “you have been, like me, roughly treated.”

"But is it not all over now?" replied Dennis. "You have brought Mr. Charles back with you, and all's right."

"I wish I had, Dennis—my good, kind master! I have not seen him since they kidnapped me in Milan. But how are the ladies?"

"Sleeping heartily, I hope," said Dennis "after the mighty, pretty bustle of yesterday. The killing of the Count, and the storming of his castle was work enough for one day."

"What do you mean, Dennis," exclaimed Werner, in astonishment.

But before he could reply, Matilda, with Emily, entered the room. Emily blushed rosy red at the sight of Werner. Matilda started, and joyfully approached him.

"This is indeed unexpected, good Werner; but come you alone?"

"Alone, lady," was the slow reply.

"But know you aught of Mr. Charles? Is he well?"

"Such is my belief," answered Werner; "but this packet will best explain."

"'Tis indeed from him," said Matilda, "his own handwriting. Let me be left alone, Wer-

ner, for its perusal, after which I will send for you."

She tore it open in trembling anxiety, and the rest of the party entered, as she commenced reading as follows:—

"MY SWEET COZ.,

"My spirits are not wholly depressed, though I am shut out from the light of day, and my movements confined within the narrow limits of a naked cell, that seems to have been scooped out of the bowels of a rock, but where situated, I know not.

"I had paid my promised visit to Seymour, and was on my way to the theatre, to make enquiries about Werner, when, in passing through the solitary street, where my adventure with Louise occurred, a woman rushed out of a lonely court, and implored my aid to prevent murder. Without thought, I followed her up the dark passage into a low dwelling, and scarcely had I entered, when the door was hastily shut behind me, and I was seized by strong hands, blindfolded, and gagged. It was done in comparative silence.

“In a few minutes, I was hurried through the passage again, and lifted into a carriage, and into which I was followed by two men. We proceeded at a rapid rate, for some hours, changing horses at intervals, during which time little conversation passed between my guards, so as to enable me to glean some knowledge from them. I doubted not they were the Count’s emissaries, and that I was now in the power of our formidable foe.

“I thought of the dear friends I had left behind me, of their dreadful, lingering suspense, of their unprotected state, till my brain was in a whirl. The carriage again stopped, when they now ungagged me, and offered me wine, after which I was borne into another of smaller size, and from our slow and rough jolting pace, I conjectured, we had turned from the more open road into a wilder district. The road seemed more rugged and difficult as we proceeded onwards, for we frequently stopped, and my conductors were impatient at our slow progress.

“At length, there was a final halt. They ordered me out of the carriage, with an intimation that the short remainder of our journey

would be continued on foot. The path seemed circuitous, and among lofty rocks, and so narrow, that we could only move singly.

“ At length, a voice hailed us,

“ ‘ Who goes there ?’

“ ‘ Don’t shoot your friends, good Hugo.’

“ ‘ Where have you been loitering, lazy rogues, to be thus late ?’

“ ‘ Blame us not, Hugo, we got hold of the wrong bird at first ; but what’s in your flask ? Ours are empty.’

“ We passed the sentry, and, after some toilsome labour, again stopped. From the confined air and echoing sound, we seemed to enter a cave, and there was a gradual descent for some minutes, when we were hailed by another voice,

“ ‘ Stand—who goes there ?’

“ ‘ Friends, my lad ; and right glad to get back. Is supper ready ?’

“ The bandage was now stripped from me ; and I found myself in a narrow, underground passage, so low, that I was obliged to stoop, and in front was the glimmer of a distant lamp ; but the passage gradually became wider and higher. Some bars were now removed,



and we entered a spacious cavern, well lighted, and furnished with some attention to comfort. Two or three passages branching from it, seemed to indicate other secret places, and the cavern was overlooked, on one side, by a rude balcony. There were a few inmates, all in different postures, fast asleep, with their carbines by their side, save one, who was seated at a table, with papers and books before him.

“ ‘How now,’ he cried, starting up, ‘have the wine-houses tempted you to disobey orders?’

“ But before they made their report, I was conducted to an inner cell, silently stared at by the awakened sleepers, and left alone to my own thoughts.

“ The cell was not wholly desolate, as it contained a bed, and a few articles of clumsy furniture, and was lighted by a lamp, as if the arrival of an inmate had been expected.

“ The man who was seated writing, and who seemed the chief of these brigands, was, as far as my hasty glance gathered, young, and even noble-looking, and I impatiently waited for a conference with him.

“ At length, he opened the door himself,

and summoned me to follow him into the large cavern, where I found a table, provided with viands and wine, but there was no one visible but himself and the sentry, whose dim shadow was seen in the passage.

“‘I have sent my men to their supper,’ he said, with a manner and tone of voice that almost fascinated me; ‘we can now sit down without interruption.’

“‘First answer my questions. Why am I forced here—and what is your object?’

“‘I grant your right,’ was his reply, ‘to ask these questions; but there are different professions in the world, and mine is to do as I like, and acknowledge no law but my own will.’

“‘I can gather no other from what I have observed; but you must allow, some little anxiety is natural on my part. Is my life, as well as my liberty, endangered?’

“‘No,’ was his instant reply, ‘except from your own obstinacy. Nor will your imprisonment be long, except from the same cause.’

“‘What then is your object with me? Be assured you mistake my character if you expect me to submit to any act of degradation to myself, or injury to others.’

“‘I think I gather your meaning,’ replied the bandit; ‘make yourself easy. I have brought you here for purposes of my own, which, if I mistake not, will be easy of fulfilment on your part. To-morrow shall be a day of business, till when, no farther allusion must be made to it. Now, follow my example and sit down.’

“His tone was temperate but firm. There was nothing decisively alarming in his words, and I made up my mind to yield to the storm, and take advantage of circumstances as they might arise, as it might tend to my own injury, was I to irritate him by resistance which would evidently prove futile. I therefore sat down, and my compliance seemed to please him.

“‘Now for an addition to our company. I presume, at your age, you have no aversion to female society.’

“He rang a silver hand-bell, and presently a female made her appearance from one of the side passages, whose exquisite beauty and figure took me by surprise. She was even delicately fair, of tall stature, and her fanciful costume set off her natural graces in a striking degree. Her features were half concealed by a white veil, as she entered with a dignified yet

timid step. I rose at her appearance, and continued standing till she was seated.

“ ‘Ada, my love,’ said the bandit, ‘remove your veil. I think you will find nothing repulsive in our guest.’ ”

“ There was no dash of coquetry in the act, though before an admiring stranger; but it seemed simply done in obedience to the wish of one she loved.

“ I was placed in a singular position. Even in a bandit’s cavern, where I had been dragged by brute force, I was called upon to exercise that vigilance and propriety of conduct which might be considered little in harmony with so rude an atmosphere.

“ A little page, also fancifully dressed, and who had accompanied the lady, ministered to our wants.

“ At times, I even forgot my own situation, so much was I interested in what was passing, and in the manly conversation of my host. He was open and candid in talking about himself. He said he was a Roman, nobly born, but compelled to be a fugitive, owing to the part he had taken in a popular insurrection, as it was called, but which was a noble struggle on the part of an oppressed people.

“ ‘I have since,’ he continued, ‘been a proscribed wanderer on the sea—a corsair as the world would call me—and grew so enamoured of a roving life, that I vowed never more to submit to the exactions of tyranny. Yet, I am not naturally cruel, and in the course of my adventures have had many blessings from grateful hearts. In one of our cruizes among the lovely islands of the Egean, we fell in with a Turkish vessel, the crews of which nation had been the objects of my deepest hostility, owing to their wholesale barbarities on the unoffending islanders. After a short conflict, we captured her, and gave liberty to several beautiful captives, destined for sale at Constantinople. Among them was one that particularly interested me. Her peaceful home had been surprised by Turkish savages, her widowed mother and brothers slaughtered before her eyes, and she was, with other maidens, carried away captive. She was alone in the world. Her desolate state interested me even more than her surpassing beauty. Nay, blush not, Ada, I am no flatterer. And she is now my wife, and has rendered each succeeding day happier than the last.’

“ ‘Nay, dearest,’ she murmured forth, ‘never

can you be truly happy till you have abandoned this roving life, with all its anxieties and dangers. Would that we were together in my own beautiful island! There we might enjoy at liberty, the pure breath of Heaven; while here, if we venture forth, we are scared back as if unworthy of the common boon. And our infant boy, too—I have all a mother's fears about him.'

"‘Indeed, Ada, ever since you were mine, you have been my better angel, and my heart responds to your wishes. Certain events, even now pending, may realize them sooner than you anticipate.’

"‘Heaven speed the day,’ she replied, and rose to go, and making a graceful obeisance to myself, she disappeared, followed by her page.

"After her departure, the bandit remained thoughtful a few minutes.

"‘You were not prepared, Mr. Merton,’ he at length said, ‘(you see I am aware of your name) for such a lovely apparition in a bandit’s cave—a place so little calculated for a delicate female, or for delicacy of sentiment.’

"‘You speak truth; I was not prepared—nor, indeed, to meet with one like yourself



associated with desperate wretches whose lives are already forfeited to justice.'

"An indignant glow for a moment lighted his look.

" 'Some months ago, that boldness might have proved fatal to you; but Ada herself has held the same language. I almost feel a coward when I think of her.'

" 'Then, why not break the link at once, while in your power? You may have cause bitterly to regret delay. Treason may be at work, even now, among those you trust.'

"The bandit started.

" 'Is not your haunt,' I continued, 'suspected by the police?'

" 'My greatest danger,' he replied, 'is from my own men; but even suspicion of treason is punished with instant death, so that it is of rare growth among us. When, from my wife's earnest wishes, I quitted the ocean-life, my prejudices against society, and fondness for adventure, still continued. I founded this band, among whom were one or two discontented spirits. In a mutinous outbreak, I shot one dead. This lulled, but did not stop the bad feeling. My wife's vigilance was ever awake. With all a woman's tact, she suspected and

detected something wrong, and we were on the alert. Our number was fourteen, out of which I could only trust six. The rest conspired against me, including the two sentinels; but we were prepared to catch them in their own toils. The mutineers were sent on the scout as usual, and returned at midnight, and were admitted, by the sentry, into this cavern, eager for plunder, and unsuspecting of detection. I was waiting for them, with my wife and trusty friends, in that balcony above, well armed. No lamp was burning, and they were enveloped in darkness. Their curses were awful as they groped for the passages and found heavy bars across. A volley was fired from the balcony—another and another, and they were all dead as sparrows. They lie buried in that corner, and you may read an inscription on the stone—*The Reward of Treason*; which is a silent warning to future conspirators. Since then, we have been as true as steel to each other. But I hear the challenge of the sentry—we must part till to-morrow. Return to your cell, where you will find a few comforts, and should you require anything, knock within at the door, and the sentry will hear you.’

“I was now alone, and indeed had ample

food for reflection. I had been hitherto so engrossed and interested by all I had witnessed since my imprisonment, that my thoughts had been diverted from my own situation, but now it pressed exclusively upon me. Yet it presented nothing tangible to rest upon, or to form any estimate of what the future was likely to produce. The bandit, from mentioning my name, was doubtless familiar with my concerns, but on what grounds could I be of that importance to his interests, as thus to warrant my violent seizure and imprisonment? There was yet no proof that he was connected with the Count, to whom he had not made the slightest allusion in our interview. To-morrow was to be the day of business. To-morrow I shall know my fate, the agitating mystery will be cleared up. Three or four hours thus passed away. I heard no sound save the measured tread of the sentinel. Some books with wine and refreshments had been considerably provided for me, and it was gratifying to think that probably to Ada's thoughtful attention, I was indebted for these proofs of kindness. The night wore on; I heard voices and the tramp of feet, which I attributed to the arrival of the band, and at intervals, the

voice of my host, but in one half-hour all seemed to be wrapt in sleep. The lamp suddenly expired, and after praying for strength from above, I flung myself on the bed, and in spite of dangers, past, present, or to come, I fell fast asleep, and must have continued so several hours, as I was awoke by some one standing by my bed-side, holding a lamp. It was the bandit.

“ ‘ This looks well, Mr. Merton; I was fearful of your want of rest. Now rise, the sun has been up an hour or two, though we are shy of admitting his beams here.’ ”

“ He left the lamp, and retired.

“ The day was now arrived, which was to decide my fate, and when I was ready to leave the cell, I yet stood lingering as if I had a presentiment of evil, till with a sort of desperate resolution, I passed into the cavern. A table was arranged for breakfast, but the bandit was seated apart writing.

“ ‘ Now for our morning meal, Mr. Merton.’ ”

“ It passed over in silence on my part, for suspense and expectation were busy at my heart, but there was no apparent change in the freedom and kindness of his manner.

“ ‘Now, Mr. Merton, the next hour I shall devote to you, and for better privacy, we will retire into your apartment.’

“I followed him there. A table with writing materials was already laid out, though how conveyed there, I could not divine. When we were seated,

“ ‘You are aware, Mr. Merton,’ said the bandit, ‘of the nature of my profession. We recognise no law save our own will, though at times we are capable of generous actions, however, the world may suspect the motive. There are men who laugh at all laws, human or divine, yet who would respect a pledge given, and consider a promise, binding even to the death.’

“ ‘With such characters, I said, I have had no intercourse, and it is an equivocal praise, you bestow upon them.

“ ‘From what I have seen of you, Mr. Merton, I could depend upon your word as upon the most solemn obligation. I hope I might merit the same consideration from yourself.’

“I merely bowed, and said nothing.

“ ‘Mr. Merton,’ he continued, after a pause, ‘I am compelled by external and irresistible influences to act at times, contrary to the dictates of a better feeling, and to bear imputa-

tions, I should otherwise revolt from. I am not, as you may think, an independent master of my own actions. I am a subordinate agent, the servant of another, whose commands, however severe and unpalatable, I am bound to obey. You might tell me to rend this slavery, but it is impossible, for my imperious tyrant saved my life, yes, rescued me from an ignominious death. When I abandoned the sea, scarce had I set foot on shore, when I was recognised, seized, imprisoned, and condemned to be publicly executed. I was rescued, but on conditions that rendered me, body and soul, a slave to the will of another.'

“ ‘What reference can this have to me?’ I impatiently said, ‘at another time I might be interested, but now.’

“ ‘Wait,’ he replied. ‘On my first interview with my deliverer, I was won by his dexterity and daring, so congenial to my own disposition. We organized this band of which I was intrusted with the command, while he roved about a sort of citizen of the world, levying contributions on society, and laughing at his dupes. To this his gentlemanly appearance and title of Count, afforded great facilities.’



“I started at the mention of the Count, and eagerly listened.

“We had frequent communications as events often occurred, in which mutual co-operation was necessary. Lately these communications from him have been of a desponding nature. His bold, gigantic depredations had alarmed the police, and he feared it would be necessary to baffle pursuit by escaping beyond sea, to effect which my maritime knowledge would be of importance. Only a fortnight ago he sent a confidential agent with decisive intelligence.

“‘The crisis has arrived,’ he said, ‘Europe is now too hot for me; my gaming reverses have been also serious, owing to my wonted manœuvres having been unexpectedly over-matched. All this is aggravated by certain discoveries which have roused the authorities. The wealthy banker at Florence, must bleed freely. My plans are too well laid for disappointment. In the meantime, you must have recourse to an expedient sometimes resorted to, and with success, among your profession to raise the wind. There will arrive on such a day at Milan, a travelling party consisting of

that female relative of mine, of whom you have heard me speak, who had the luck to step into possession of a large property to which I was the next heir, of two young English ladies, one a wealthy heiress, between whom and myself exists a deadly feud, and an Englishman named Charles Merton, a cousin of the heiress, a busy, spirited youth, whom with the rest I cordially detest, and would without remorse, see the whole swept from the earth.'

"Here the bandit paused; but I made no remark, and he continued,

"The sudden seizure of Charles Merton, and carrying him off by stealth, to your secret cavern, may be productive of a considerable sum in my present necessities. His disappearance will alarm the females, not only on his account, but their own, as they will be left without a protector, and will gladly pay any ransom that may be demanded for his release. When you have secured your prisoner, state to him the cause of his detention, and that he can only purchase his liberation by the instant payment of 6000 crowns. Tell him, at once, by whose orders he has been carried off, and he will presently be convinced, from my undying hostility, there can be no hope for

him, except in immediate compliance. If he wishes to communicate with his friends, I have his servant yet in limbo, whom those stupid fellows, through over haste, first secured instead of his master. The man is impatient of confinement, and has already pledged himself to be the bearer of any letter from his master, and to return with the answer without compromising my safety. This pledge, I fear not, will be duly redeemed.'

"The bandit was silent, and looked earnestly at me, as waiting my reply. My suspicions were now confirmed. I was in the power of the Count, from whom I had nothing to hope, yet my spirit seemed to rise against his insulting tyranny.

" 'Well do I understand,' at length I said, 'the character of this self-styled Count, whose career of unexampled villany has long been familiar to me and mine; but the vengeance of Heaven will not for ever sleep, and the public executioner must, ere long, cut short this cold-blooded murderer.'

" 'Mr. Merton,' said the bandit, calmly, 'neither the Count or myself are immaculate, or pretend to be so. Ask yourself what good this violent burst will do you. It will only

tend to aggravate your trouble ; and it would be better judgment to turn your attention to the conditions of your release which, from what I have heard, appear by no means formidable.'

" This calm reply was not without its effect.

" ' I have read of this mode of levying contributions,' I said, ' by the banditti, that infested, in former days, the fastnesses of Italy, but that it should be now practised, surpasses belief.'

" The bandit laughed.

" ' You see, Mr. Merton, we have no reluctance to copy from our forefathers. The mode works well in modern times.'

" ' My own means,' I said, ' cannot even distantly reach this wild demand ; and am not I a stranger in a foreign land ?'

" ' But you English never travel without letters of credit.'

" ' It may be ; but my own credit would barely realize, at present, three hundred crowns, for I have never wantonly trespassed upon the limited means of my indulgent father.'

" ' But you have, with you, powerful friends, who would cheerfully make large sacrifices for your release.'

“ ‘ Even with the wealthy it might be irksome to raise so large an amount of coin on the instant.’

“ ‘ Even that,’ replied the bandit, ‘ the foresight of the Count has provided against. Half the amount in bills of exchange, drawn by yourself, or your friends, on known bankers will not be objected to. There are accommodating Jews everywhere, and one is now ready prepared to melt them for a certain premium, having already enquired about you all, as to his probable risk. You see, Mr. Merton, I am open and candid with you. I feel interested for you, and I would gladly set you at liberty, unconditionally, but there is a paramount feeling within me that renders even the intercessions of Ada, in your behalf, powerless.’

“ ‘ Believe me,’ I replied, ‘ this kindness is not lost upon me. Oh, that Ada’s wish was gratified, and that you were both far away from the fatal grasp of this unrelenting monster !’ .

“ He was evidently affected as he rose,

“ ‘ Mr. Merton, I will now leave you. Think of what has passed, and in one hour I will return for your final determination.’

“ He left me. How was it, that, when alone,

I was so deeply interested about this man that, for the moment, I forgot myself? I thought of the terrible fate of his gentle, unoffending wife, at that dread hour when his forfeit life should be claimed by the outraged laws of society. But these thoughts were momentary. Suspense was now over. I knew the worst; and that the conditions on which my freedom depended, would never be departed from. I paced my solitary cell, absorbed in thought. Considering the important results that would ensue, I was not long in deciding as to the folly of rejecting these terms, which, at times, seemed trivial, compared with the happiness of seeing you all again, and of being near to protect and advise you at the coming crisis.

“I was now all impatience to close with the offered terms. Yes, you might be involved in fresh troubles, and the malice of your bitter enemy might now fall with increased rancour, and with more fatal effect, on your defenceless head.

“At any sacrifice, I must and will be with you. I had arrived at this conclusion, when the bandit suddenly appeared.



“ ‘Can the hour,’ I cried, ‘be so soon past?’

“ ‘It is somewhat exceeded.’

“ ‘Allow me, in the first place, to ask, what assurance have I, that in case I fulfil the conditions of my release, that this self-styled Count will not deceive me at last?’

“ ‘I wonder not at your caution, Mr. Merton. I would willingly pledge you my assurance, that I will protect you against any evil consequences; but such pledge you may, probably, consider futile, as coming from a contaminated source.’

“ ‘I accept it,’ I said.

“ ‘’Tis cheerfully and faithfully given, Mr. Merton; and I gather from these questions that you are favorably disposed to close with the required conditions.’

“ ‘I will not deny it. I will myself draw upon my father’s London Bankers, for half the amount of my ransom.’

“ ‘Very well, Mr. Merton; but it must be coupled with a letter of advice to be attached to the bill, which advice I must dictate. It shall be short, and contain nothing objectionable.’

“‘I have already proved,’ I replied, ‘that I repose confidence in you. Then, as to the other half, to be supplied in cash; I shall open my situation to my friends, and entrust my despatch to you for transmission. Am I at liberty to detail all that has occurred to me since my forcible seizure at Milan to the present moment? Will my despatch be opened?’

“‘Write freely, Mr. Merton. Your letter shall not be opened here, and will, I am sanguine, reach your friends without being inspected.’

“‘I am satisfied,’ I said; ‘and how long will you allow me to prepare it?’

“‘The messenger will not be despatched till midnight, and it is not yet noon, so that you will not be hurried. How now,’ he cried, suddenly starting. ‘Ada! why come here?’

“Ada stood before us, but how she gained admission, as the door into the cell continued shut, was to me mysterious.

“‘I come to make another appeal,’ she said, mournfully, intently gazing upon her husband. ‘If not for your own sake, if not for your wife’s, yet for your child’s sake, listen to my prayers, ere it be too late. Leave this dis-

astrous course of life that perils both body and soul. The wealth which you eagerly grasp at, is it not stained with infamy and blood? I would rather submit to the meanest servitude, if honest, than purchase pleasure at such a cost. All my earthly comforts are centred in your safety, and is it not hourly endangered? Last night,' and she suddenly clasped her hands, 'I dreamed that you were led to execution, among a shouting rabble, and they laughed at my screams.'

" 'Ada, my love,' said the discomposed bandit, 'calm these extravagances. Recollect the presence of Mr. Merton.'

" 'It is his presence that rather emboldens me. Did not you tell me that Mr. Merton had expressed a kind interest in your welfare, and advised you, like me, to abandon this course of guilt and danger? Let us escape this day—this hour. Something tells me to-morrow will be too late.'

" 'Ada, my love,' he replied, with a tender embrace, 'you know what ties bind me to this Count. He is preparing to quit the kingdom. That done, I will be all you wish. Now return to your child.'

“ ‘You hear his promise, Mr. Merton,’ she said, turning to me.

“ ‘I do, and Heaven grant its speedy fulfilment.’

“ They left the cell together.

“ Since their departure, I have been busily engaged in writing my present despatch. It is long, but I have been thus particular, well aware that even the minutest incident will prove interesting to you all. The sudden demand upon my father will, I fear, distress him, but I have the consolation of thinking, that was he now at my side, he would approve of all I have done. With regard to the rest, am I premature in concluding that you will willingly assist me in my dilemma, as far as the serious deficiency required beyond the proceeds of my last letter of credit; which you will find in my travelling case, of which I enclose the key? Your kind heart will, I suspect, freely give, without looking for repayment; but I am unwilling to have this heavy load on my conscience, of which I shall labour hard to be relieved at an early period. I have much more to communicate in expression of my feelings, but, under the circumstances, deem it prudent to be cautious.

“I often think of Seymour. God grant he may be already restored to health, and able to supply my place at your side; willing, I am sure he is. Our two trusty attendants too, Werner and Dennis, where are they? I shall not rest, till they are restored to us. And now what shall I say to our dear, dear friends, Madame, Emily, Louise, and your faithful Mary? May every blessing await them, and speedy be a joyful re-union to us all.”

With many a pause, Matilda finished the reading of this important document, which was listened to with thrilling interest by her breathless auditors. Scarcely was it ended, when Emily started up, sprang forward, and fell on her knees, before Matilda.

“Hear me, my dear Miss Godfrey, hear me, hear me. I have five hundred pounds of my own, all belonging to myself, I have heard my uncle say so more than once, take it, take it all for poor Charles’s release, and would God it had been more.”

There was not a tear on her cheek; but Matilda pressed the generous pleader in her arms, while her own sobs were wild and audible. For some moments she could not reply.

“My own dear Emily,” at length she said, “I am not surprised at this noble burst of feeling. Charles shall know it all; but if his ransom yet prove to be unavoidable, none must share it with me. Now do I feel the proud use to which wealth may be applied.”

“What !” said Madame, “is my heart supposed to be so callous that I would not willingly bear any part in the good work, and that I can see, with thankless indifference, the serious perils which threaten even the life of one so dear to me? Oh, no, no. All that I have, I cheerfully give, and even then I shall poorly repay all he has done for me.”

“My dear, respected friend,” said Matilda, “forgive my seeming selfishness. For the moment I thought of nothing but the exquisite joy I should feel in appropriating a small portion of my overgrown wealth to such a purpose.”

“Never,” cried Seymour, while his manly cheek did not disdain a tear, as he witnessed the foregoing scene, “never has it been my lot to have my feelings so powerfully awakened as now. But, my dear ladies, cease this rivalry of kindness, for in the course of this day, it is



more than probable that Charles will be restored to us free and unfettered. The activity of the police officer excites my wonder, he seems to inherit a frame of iron, bidding defiance to fatigue or sleep. But let Werner be now acquainted with the purport of Charles's dispatch."

Werner, after delivering the letter, had been since engaged apart with Dennis, and had listened with amazement to the almost incredible events of the preceding day, which would so materially change the aspect of affairs.

Dennis was no less eager in communicating, than Werner was in listening, so that when he received the summons to wait upon the ladies, he had scarcely recovered from the excitement caused by such an overwhelming torrent of wonders.

"Good Werner," said Matilda, "the packet of which you were the bearer, you already know, is from Mr. Charles; but I presume you are not aware of his critical situation. Hear, then, the contents."

Seymour, however, to spare her a repetition of the fatigue, gave a summary of its purport, referring occasionally to the letter itself for those passages that were most important.

“He is, then, safe,” cried Werner, at the conclusion; “the Count did not deceive me.”

“Say, Werner,” said Matilda, “what was the extent of your intercourse with this unhappy man?”

“I have seen him but once. When kidnapped in the streets of Milan, I was confined in a retired dwelling without the walls, and after some hours, was in hopes of regaining my liberty, as I by chance discovered I was apprehended through mistake; but I was suddenly removed to a distant place of imprisonment. Being blind-folded, I was ignorant of the route; but after a journey which occupied many hours we stopped, and when the bandage was removed I found myself in a small but decent room, scantily furnished, with bed, table and chair. There was one window, but the shutters were closed, nor were they removed during my stay, so that a lamp was constantly burning. What questions I had hitherto asked were sullenly answered or unnoticed, so that though I suspected I was in the power of the Count, I was lost in bewildering suspense. I heard voices in the house; but my sole attendant was a pretty-looking

girl, who expressed her readiness to supply my wants. She seemed to be pleased in waiting upon me, and at times I thought lingered in the room, as if she was interested about me. Her name, she said, was Rose; but she innocently told me she was ordered to answer no questions, and left the room. Still she returned, and I saw she wished to talk to me.

“‘Rose,’ I said, ‘I should be lost but for your kindness. Why am I brought here, Rose?’

“‘She looked earnestly in my face.

“‘I fear, Rose, it bodes me no good.’

“‘I will ask Pierre,’ she said timidly, ‘he can refuse me nothing.’

“‘Pierre—who is he, Rose?’

“‘The valet of the great Count—he was here yesterday.’

“‘And how can he refuse you nothing, Rose?’

“‘Pierre is my lover,’ she replied, with glowing cheeks. ‘He says he will marry me if I will go over the sea with him, and I shall have such fine clothes, and be dressed like a lady.’

“‘And when does he go beyond sea, Rose?’

“‘ Any day—he bids me be ready at a minute’s warning.’

“I felt for the poor girl, who was evidently the dupe of this designing villain.

“‘ And do you love Pierre, Rose? Is there none of the neighborring lads you like better?’

“She hesitated a moment.

“‘ But who can give me fine ornaments and make a lady of me, like Pierre?’

“‘ And does your mother know, Rose?’

“‘ Oh, no! Pierre says it must be a secret.’

“‘ And would your mother approve of it?’

“‘ I think not,’ was her reluctant reply.  
‘ She says I must marry Claude.’

“‘ And who is Claude, Rose?’

“‘ A great favourite of mother’s—a sharp, industrious lad; and though he is only twenty, he has saved forty crowns.’

“I saw, by her eagerness, he was not indifferent to her.

“‘ And you loved Claude before you met with Pierre, Rose?’ she blushed deeply; ‘but Pierre has tempted you with fine clothes and the offer of marrying you, to desert your poor mother, and ill-use this deserving lad.’

"She looked frightened, and asked me if I knew Pierre.

" 'I do, Rose: he is a villain, and will deceive you. If you listen to him, you will be a miserable girl. Remain with your mother, marry Claude, and you will be happy.'

" 'I am sure you wish me well,' said the trembling girl; 'and I will think about it.'

"This conversation took place at different times, as her visits were short; and I felt gratified with the hope that my caution would yet save the unsuspecting victim. She was leaving the room with a dejected countenance, when the door suddenly opened.

" 'It is the Count!' exclaimed Rose.

" 'How now, Rose,' he said, as he hastily advanced, 'alone with a stranger! This is treason against Pierre—I shall acquaint him.'

"As she left the room, he approached me.

" 'You know me, Werner?'

"I merely bowed.

" 'I mean you no harm, Werner.'

" 'Then why have I been forced here?'

" 'You love your master?'

"I bowed again.

" 'The silly youth,' he continued, 'has got

himself into a serious scrape, and is now imprisoned.'

"I started.

" 'My master's actions are before the world. He is incapable of wrong.'

"He affected to laugh.

" 'You are the very man for him, as he may require some one to speak to his character sooner than you think. You will want now another service—indeed, I will take you into mine, and make a man of you.'

" 'I have no wish to change,' I firmly replied; 'but you evade my question—why am I dragged here?' and I leaned with my back against the door, as if to bar his departure.

"He was furious.

" 'Silly fool,' he cried; 'know that was I to put this whistle to my mouth, you would find yourself instantly bound hand and foot. You well know that I am not to be trifled with.'

"I was convinced of this, and thought it policy to temporize.

" 'Why,' I calmly asked, 'am I forcibly brought here?'

" 'Not for your own advantage: for mine only—your master is imprisoned!'



“ ‘The same tongue that tells me so, can, no doubt, order his liberation.’

“ ‘True; but his liberty depends on certain conditions which, if complied with, well—if not you see him no more.’

“ ‘I felt real alarm, knowing his fiendish spirit.

“ ‘Why am I brought here?’ I repeated; ‘is my seizure necessary for his liberation?’

“ ‘Let me at once tell you,’ he replied, ‘that you may ensure your own liberty, and probably your master’s also, by your honourable fulfilment of a trifling commission with which I shall entrust you.’

“ ‘Your language,’ I said, ‘is somewhat contradictory; but explain.’

“ ‘Your master, as I have told you, is imprisoned—where, is not to the purpose. Now, mark the conditions on the fulfilment of which you ensure your freedom. I shall require you to be the bearer of a letter to the English girl who I understand is your master’s cousin, Miss Godfrey.’

“ ‘And from whom?’ I asked.

“ ‘From your master. You shall be duly advised where you may find her. Within a

given time, you must return with the written answer, to a particular spot whence you will be conveyed here. I shall be present to meet you; and on delivering the reply, you shall have your liberty.'

"The terms seem easy enough; but will my master's freedom follow?"

"Be easy on that head. The conditions are not difficult, and will require the honourable fulfilment of the promise to return, which I shall exact from you. Once at liberty, you may be tempted to break the engagement—the penalty of which will assuredly be injurious to your master. Do you understand?"

"I do. I accept the office with the conditions, to which I shall rigidly adhere, but what assurance have I in return that you will not deceive me at last?"

He looked fierce for the moment, but calmly replied,

"By doubting me you injure your master. If this negotiation be broken off, the consequence will be his lengthened imprisonment, and probably worse."

I no longer hesitated.

"When shall I be wanted?"

“In the course of the ensuing night, till when, farewell,”

After this interview the mists of uncertainty were in some degree dissipated. My master was, like myself, in the power of his merciless enemy, whose altered demeanour to myself excited a natural suspicion that there was some deep-laid scheme in progress, but of what nature I tasked my powers in vain to discover. However my promise had been given and it was now too late to depart from it, but much might depend on my own vigilance. I was in deep thought when the entrance of Rose roused me. Her features were full of intelligence.

“I have seen Claude,” was her instant remark, “He knows all about Pierre. He says I am just warned in time. A brother vine-dresser from Geneva recognized Pierre, and told Claude what a vile wretch he was, and that he would be taken up was he to set foot in Geneva again. Claude says, he has often wondered my mother would harbour such people.”

“And why does she, Rose?”

Rose hesitated.

“I am told not to answer any questions.”

“And yet we have talked together, Rose.”

“Yes, yes,” she replied, quickly “but then it was all about myself.”

I could not help admiring her prudence, and considered it ungenerous to press her farther confidence, but I listened with pleasure to her artless thanks for my timely warning, and Claude, she said, would thank me too as she had told him about me. As the time approached, when I might expect the promised communication from the Count, I kept myself in readiness, and from the silence in the house I judged it might be almost midnight, when my door was softly opened and three men stealthily entered. They seized me, tied a bandage over my eyes and with a caution not to speak, they led me out of the house, forced me into a carriage, and after an hour's slow jolting pace we reached a more level road, over which we proceeded rapidly. In two or three hours we halted, my guards sprang out, ordered me to follow, and after ten minutes' walk, we stopped. They now eased me of my bandage. The night breeze blew fresh and chilly. The mountain scenery around was silent and solitary and the moon rode

unclouded above us. We stood near a huge stone-cross which marked the junction of three branching roads, but I was allowed no time for observation.

“‘Now listen’ said one, ‘time presses. You recollect the agreement between the noble Count and yourself. Here is the packet for the English lady, the reply to which you must yourself, bring back to-morrow night, to the same spot where we now stand, under this stone-cross. This is the main road to Genoa, and you will find your friends at the Inn in Voltaggio, which is only a few miles before you. At midnight we meet again. Onward and look not back.’

“I received the packet, and proceeded along the road pointed out to me, at a quick pace, and without caring to look behind me, reached this inn without interruption.”

“Little was my wretched relative aware,” said Madame, “when he parted from you, Werner, that he would so soon be summoned to his dread account.”

“It was my fixed resolve,” observed Werner, “faithfully to adhere to my promise, and to return at midnight to the appointed place of meeting, but events have been ordered other-

wise. Mr. Seymour anticipates my master's appearance this day, and it is more than probable, for the sudden death of the Count must derange all his plans, and those also of his subordinate agents. They must now all fall to pieces like a rope of sand."

"I agree with you, good Werner," said Matilda, "the serious purport of Charles' letter now assumes a different aspect, and the conditions by which you considered yourself bound, seem altogether nugatory. We have now only to wait with what patience we can, in the humble hope that events, though unseen by ourselves, are still working together for our ultimate happiness. A few hours will probably decide."

It was incessant, anxious conversation, both within and without the parlour, and the hours lagged on, and speculation was busy as to the probable steps which the officer would take after they left the tower. As Matilda stood on the lofty terrace-walk behind the Inn, with Seymour by her side, her thoughts wandered to the previous evening, when she started from thence on her perilous expedition.

"What almost incredible events have taken place, Mr. Seymour, since I issued forth from



this very spot last evening, when unable from racking suspense, to remain longer inactive. Behind that projecting rock, is the roadside Inn, where the unfortunate widow must now be suffering the united pressure of sickness and terror.

“I had some thoughts,” replied Seymour, “of effecting an interview with her, but I did not consider it policy as I might be interfering with the plans laid down by the officer respecting her. Although she must have had guilty knowledge of her husband’s proceedings, she is yet an object of compassion.”

“And poor Ada, the bandit’s wife,” said Emily, who had joined them, “she whom Charles so feelingly describes, what may be her fate?”

“Yes, dear Emily,” replied Matilda, “like yourself, I cannot help feeling deeply interested about her. If it be necessary to use force in extirpating the banditti, I fear the officer will be no respecter of persons.”

While her companions walked along the terrace, Emily stood still, earnestly gazing in one particular direction, where she could catch here and there occasional glimpses of the distant road amidst the breaks of the interposing

mountains. It was by that road Charles would probably arrive, should he in the changing events recover his freedom. Every hour, yes every minute he might be expected. With all the longing of pure and innocent affection, she had prayed for his safe return, and wept in secret, when no eye was upon her, the heavy trials to which he was exposed alone, and which she would willingly have shared with him. She had not slept during the night, and from an early hour her restless feet had frequently wandered forth to watch for his coming.

And still the beauteous statue continued to gaze upon the mountain road, nor was her vigilance doomed to disappointment. Along the farthest glimpse of the road, a figure shot rapidly, and was soon hidden by the intervening heights. Again it issued to view, to be again as quickly lost, but at the next opening it was more distinctly visible. Her look grew more fixed, intensely fastened upon the approaching object till at length unwonted ecstasy flashed from her eyes, her pale cheeks became rosy red. It was he, the object of her hopes, fears, and wishes, and with a cry of rapture that quickly brought Matilda to her side, she waved her handkerchief in the air, and loudly called his name. The party eagerly assembled

and all hastened forward to welcome the restored youth, who, at a distance, had recognised his friends, and urged his panting steed to a swifter pace. It was a meeting that words cannot do justice to. The past was forgotten in the warm embrace, the joyous clasp of the hand, the reiterated greeting, but there was one that timidly stood behind, and came not forward to claim his notice.

“Emily,” said Matilda, smiling, “shall I introduce you to my friend, Charles.”

She no longer hesitated, and the interchange of a single look spoke a language which they both well understood.

“Seymour, too!” at length cried Charles. “This is not only what I wished, but what I expected from you. You have guarded my treasures, when I was far away, unable to protect them.”

“It is a poor compensation, dear Charles,” replied Seymour, “for all that you and yours have done for me.”

And their friendship, from that moment, was cemented, never, through life, to be broken.

And the meeting was scarcely less cordial between Charles and his faithful servants,

whose re-union seemed so very lately, too improbable to be calculated upon.

They now retired to their private room, more freely to hear and recount all that had passed since they were so abruptly parted.

“We received,” dear Charles,” said Matilda, “your long, interesting letter by Werner this morning. Its purport was more like romance than real life. We had a struggle among ourselves, who should supply the money for your ransom. My overgrown wealth would scarcely have felt the deduction; Madame put in her claim to assist one who had done so much for her; but Emily proffered her all, all that her mother had been able to leave her, and would hardly be comforted, because it was not instantly accepted.”

“Matilda, spare me,” cried the agitated girl, clinging to her side; and Charles himself was scarcely less affected, though he felt gratified by the thrilling statement.

“But your own noble resolution, dear Matilda,” said Charles, “has since rendered my appeal to your bounty unnecessary. How can I express my astonishment, when the officer related to me the decisive events of last evening, that you had been personally engaged in

the deadly conflict in the heart of the mountains, and that a bullet, from your own hand, had terminated the career of this unrelenting monster. His death ensures us all that peace of mind to which we have been so long strangers. Yes, we may now breathe freely, sweet coz., and a prouder, sweeter consequence will yet ensue, for a solid foundation is now in progress of being laid, which will, in due time, prove, in the face of the world, the injustice of that sentence which has disgraced innocence with the brand of guilt."

There was a momentary silence, for all understood the application, and the lips of Matilda quivered with emotion.

"But now," continued Charles, "for a relation of the adventures which led to my liberation, which I will detail in a connected narrative, though I was only acquainted with the major part, by the officer, after my freedom had been effected by his persevering energy. When he had so considerably provided for your departure from the tower, he turned his immediate attention to the important duties that now devolved upon him. He had with him about a dozen members of his own force, whom, in the course of our route, he had

fallen in with, and, with prudent caution, appointed to meet him at one of the passes of the Apennines. He retired with two or three of his men into the room, where the Count had so lately been carousing, and summoned Pierre before him. The trembling wretch appeared under guard.

“‘How now, Pierre,’ said the officer, ‘much must be done before the night wanes. You know your master’s dead?’

“‘I do,’ was the scarcely audible reply.

“‘Your punishment then comes next. It will be a mercy to you to hasten your execution, as your soul is already so black with crime.’

“‘I may make it worth your while to spare my life.’

“‘Be quick then, time presses, and speak to the point. I will promise you nothing. All depends on yourself. You were in your master’s secrets?’

“‘I was.’

“‘What claim then can you have to mercy, familiar as you must have been with every species of guilt, including murder?’

“‘I have been long tired of this course of life.’



“ ‘Aye,’ said the officer, ‘the plea of every coward. When he can no longer sin, he turns saint. Be quick, or the cord is ready that will fit your neck.’

“ ‘Mercy,’ cried the terrified culprit. ‘Where shall I begin?’

“ ‘Aye, I doubt not, the long list of your crimes would puzzle a monk, how to absolve you from them. But I will question you. Your master and his gang robbed the rich banker, at Florence?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Where was the plunder conveyed, jewels, gold and silver?’

“ ‘The whole is here.’

“ ‘What did you propose doing with it?’

“ ‘It was to have been removed this night to Genoa to be put on ship-board.’

“ ‘And the Count and yourself were to have shipped yourselves off at the same time?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Lead the way, and discover this treasure,’ said the officer, seizing a lamp.

“The wretch preceded them, but with evident hesitation. Another threat quickened his pace. He descended the steps that led to the dungeon where Dennis was immured, and,

stopping half-way, produced a ponderous key from his pocket, and opened a side door that fitted in the wall. It disclosed a small recess about two yards square, and the officer introducing the lamp, the light fell upon a variety of bags and boxes. He opened one of each for his better satisfaction.

“ ‘Where is the remainder of the plunder?’

“ ‘This is all.’

“ ‘Mark me,’ said the officer, ‘if proved false, the next moment is your last.’

“ He locked the door, and put the key in his pocket.

“ ‘This is the produce of the Florence robbery only. Where is the dépôt for your general plunder?’

“ ‘We have two. One here, another at the cavern.’

“ ‘Quick, show me the dépôt here.’

“ He now led the way, with a sort of dogged recklessness, as if any secret hope he might have entertained of reserving for himself any portion of these concealed stores, had altogether abandoned him. As they crossed an angle of the court to reach the dépôt, the old hag encountered them.

“ ‘What, Pierre, is not the grave you so

kindly dug for me, yet filled up? You are lucky, gentle sir, to be still walking about; but I shall not return the spade and tools yet.'

"He heard her chuckling laugh as he hurried past her, and her words sank into his heart, as they seemed prophetic. The officer took the key from his trembling hands, and opened an extensive vault, filled with articles of various description and value, which seemed to defy enumeration.

"He locked the door, and returned to the room, where Pierre's examination was resumed.

"'You stated, just now, the other dépôt was at the cavern; where is the cavern situated?'

"'I have no authority over the cavern; you must apply elsewhere.'

"The officer was furious at this unexpected reply.

"'Villain,' he cried, 'dare you prevaricate? Carry him off,' he said, turning to his men, 'and hang him.'

"The men seized him; but he pleaded hard for mercy, and vowed to explain all.

"'The cavern is about ten miles hence, to

those familiar with the mountain passes, but twice the distance by the common road.'

" ' Could you find the way yourself by night over these passes ?'

" ' Yes, as well as by day.'

" ' Who is in command at the cavern ?'

" ' An Italian, named Benedetto.'

" ' Is he under the control of the Count ?'

" ' Yes.'

" ' Is he a bandit by profession ?'

" ' He is.'

" ' And has a set of desperate fellows under him ?'

" ' Yes.'

" ' How many ?'

" ' Sixteen, including Benedetto.'

" ' The officer was thoughtful a moment.

" ' A young Englishman was kidnapped in the public streets of Milan, and has been missing some days. Do you know his place of confinement ?'

" ' He is a prisoner in the cavern.'

" ' His servant too ?'

" ' No, he is confined at a solitary cottage a few miles off, where the Count sometimes slept.'

“ ‘What was his object in seizing them? Are their lives in danger?’

“ ‘No. He carried off the Englishman, in order to extort a heavy ransom from his friends, who are reported wealthy.’

“ ‘And how was this to be effected?’

“ ‘He arranged all with Benedetto, who was to alarm his prisoner with threats of a lengthened imprisonment, or probably worse, if he refused to call upon his powerful friends for the stipulated ransom. The servant was to be employed in negotiating between the parties, and if successful, their immediate liberty was to follow.’

“ ‘And the Englishman is now confined there?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Has there been any communication with the cavern since the Count’s death?’

“ ‘None that I know of.’

“ ‘Are the cavern banditti absent during the night upon some plundering expedition?’

“ ‘Generally.’

“ ‘And during this night how will they be employed?’

“ ‘Upon a particular service so important that Benedetto will head them.’

“ ‘How many of the men will accompany their Captain?’

“ ‘Twelve, including Benedetto.’

“ ‘The other four will then remain on guard at the cavern?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“The officer consulted apart with his followers; then turning to Pierre,

“ ‘We shall forthwith start for the cavern. Prepare to act as our guide, and attempt no tricks, as a pistol will be close at your head.’

“The officer selected eight of his men on whom he could most depend, stationing the the rest on duty at the tower; and after a hasty refreshment, in order to recruit themselves previous to a long, fatiguing night-march over an unknown, mountainous district, he placed himself at their head, with the purpose of intercepting the banditti unawares, ere they reached the cavern. As they were setting out, Balfour begged the officer’s permission to accompany him.

“ ‘I grant it cheerfully,’ was the reply. ‘I am already indebted, Balfour, to your zeal and energy, and your presence may set me more at liberty. Keep close watch over Pierre.’

“But Pierre seemed now more reconciled to



the task forced upon him, as before starting he had drained a flask of wine, which the officer did not object to, as he wished to revive his powers which were almost prostrated by overpowering terrors, and the clear possession of which was now so needful for the harassing duties before them. They were all armed with carbines, and the moon, just risen, as yet faintly lighted the cold, rugged features of the wild scenery as the adventurous band silently pursued their way, making slow progress at first, but gradually increasing their pace until, at the close of the third hour, the path became more difficult, and entangled with broken masses detached from the precipices above, over which they at length reached a narrow ravine or cleft, in a perpendicular rock, of so confined a space that it could only be passed singly. Their guide had been more than usually communicative, which the officer was inclined to attribute to the liquor in which he had so freely indulged; but still he, as well as Balfour, were on the alert against treachery.

“ ‘We are now in the neighbourhood of the cavern,’ observed Pierre.

“ ‘There seems no other outlet,’ said the officer, ‘but this narrow cleft. Does it lead

to the cavern—and are we to pass through it ?”

“ ‘ Yes.’ ”

“ ‘ Then why do you hesitate ?’ ”

“ Pierre leaned against the rock, and was silent.

“ The indignant officer drew forth his pistol ; but Balfour beckoned him aside.

“ ‘ Let us act as if we suspected him not. We may catch him in his own toils.’ Then turning to Pierre, ‘ Do you mean to lead the way through this opening ?’ ”

“ ‘ Pass quietly through yourselves, while I mount the rock to discover if there be any one prowling about. I will meet you at the farther end of the pass.’ ”

“ ‘ Balfour,’ said the officer, ‘ lead on ; the men will follow you.’ ”

“ The order was obeyed, and the officer was the last that entered the dismal pass ; but lingering behind, in a few minutes he returned softly, to watch the motions of Pierre. He was nowhere to be seen—he might have mounted the rock, but for some distance it was perpendicular and defied ascent. Still the officer crept onwards beneath its shade, and at length reached an opening where the rock terminated,

in time to catch sight of a retreating figure within, indistinctly seen in the moonlight. He cautiously followed, with difficulty keeping in sight, from the sudden turns and doubles it took among the intricacies of the rocks, sometimes gliding through crevices that barely admitted a passage and when any farther progress seemed shut out by an interposing precipice, the figure mounted by some rugged steps which had evidently been prepared for a secret purpose. The officer was, however, used to perilous night-adventures, and actively surmounted these frequent difficulties. Indeed, he felt that he could not now pause. His only hope was in keeping up with the fugitive, for was he to attempt to return, he would be altogether lost and bewildered with the entanglements which he had hitherto cleared, and which the uncertain darkness made more formidable. At length the figure paused. The officer was close behind, but concealed from notice. In front was an open moonlit space, fenced in by surrounding steepes, and on one side appeared a man seated by a blazing fire, with a flask of wine before him, and his carbine at his feet. At the low sound of a whistle, the man started up and challenged.

“ ‘It’s I—Pierre,’ was the reply.

“ And the officer, in breathless suspense, watched the meeting.

“ ‘Tell me, Julio,’ hastily cried Pierre, ‘has my messenger reached the cavern with the news of the Count’s death?’

“ ‘Yes.’

“ ‘Was he in time to stop the chief from his expedition?’

“ ‘No; he was gone.’

“ ‘And how many with him?’

“ ‘All but four, including myself.’

“ ‘My message was serious. What says his spirited wife to it?’

“ ‘She is now writing a letter to our chief, for which I am waiting, to hasten his return.’

“ ‘I will see her,’ said Pierre; and turning abruptly round the rock, disappeared.

“ The officer could not leave his hiding-place as the bandit had again resumed his seat at the fire, and he could not pass unobserved; but he was satisfied he was not far from the entrance to the cavern, and that Pierre would shortly reappear. It was so, as in a few minutes he issued forth with the expected letter.

“ ‘Here is the letter, Julio; she was jnst

finishing it. Whereabouts do you expect to meet the chief, on his return?’

“ ‘At a favourite spot with our lads, about a mile off, where they meant to have a carouse, as they will be well provided with everything of the best. You know the place well,’

“ ‘There are eight or ten of the police, Julio, well armed, within a hundred yards from us.’

“ ‘What, to storm the cavern?’

“ ‘Aye, so they think. They gave me the choice of guiding them here or having a bullet through my brains. I chose the former; but I mean to cheat them at last.’

“ ‘How, Pierre? where did you leave them?’

“ ‘I sent them round by the narrow gully, promising to meet them again at its extremity; but I crossed over the rocks to advise you all how matters stood.’

“ ‘The police are greater fools than I suspected, for allowing you to steal off at the very time when your services were most needed. I can’t help thinking they will be more than a match for you.’

“ ‘Fear not, Julio,’ said Pierre laughing.

‘I shall shortly have them all like sparrows in a net. But away, Julio, with the letter.’

“All this conference was overheard by the officer. The bandit, after receiving the letter, passed by the place where he lay concealed, and had scarcely advanced a few paces when he was laid prostrate by a severe blow from behind, which fractured his skull. The officer then seized the letter and returned to his former post, which he had scarcely reached when Pierre was seen stealthily moving away from the cavern, and the officer followed on his track like a blood-hound. He could at any moment have overtaken and seized him; but such a step was, as yet, premature. At length, a shrill whistle sounded in front, the peculiar note of which he well knew. It came from Balfour, whose suspense, owing to his continued absence, he could well divine. In a few minutes they came upon Balfour and his companions, and the officer watched Pierre’s greeting as he joined them, but in the midst of a boastful speech that he would now lead them to a certain and easy victory, his words were cut short by a powerful hand that grasped him by the throat and hurled him to the ground. There lay the



stupidified traitor, while the men stood around in silent amazement at the suddenness of the scene.

“ ‘ Balfour,’ ” the officer said, ‘ and you, my men, listen to the well-laid schemes of this traitorous villain, who designed to lure us into a trap which might have proved fatal to us all.’ ”

“ He then related all that had occurred since he parted from them, and a general burst of indignation completed the terror of the trembling wretch, while several carbines were levelled at him waiting the order to fire.

“ ‘ Not yet,’ ” cried the officer. ‘ He shall first witness the destruction of those whom he meant to be our executioners. Up, coward,’ and he pricked the kneeling suppliant with his sword, ‘ lead onward to that spot where the banditti talked of halting on their return.’ ”

“ He made no reply, his hands were tied behind him, and, with the fearful threat yet ringing in his ears, he proceeded to obey the order, from which there was no escape. Their situation required incessant vigilance. The banditti might be lurking at every turn or watching them from the heights above, and

there was an anxious discussion between the officer and Balfour about the various modes of attack, according to the position in which they should find their enemies, who exceeded them in number, and whose deeds of daring were so notorious. Their guide suddenly stood still as in the attitude of listening. The officer watched him. Faint sounds were heard, and Pierre, turning in that direction, mounted the broken rocks when he again stopped, and the sounds were more distinctly heard.

“ ‘ We are upon them,’ said Pierre. ‘ Step cautiously, a stone must not roll under your feet or they will be alarmed.’

“ They soon reached a projecting rock beneath the shade of which they looked down upon the foes they were in search of. Yes, there they were in the full height of their carousal, rendered more keenly delicious after the fatigue and success of their marauding expedition. They seemed wholly abandoned to their merriment, unsuspecting of any hostile surprise, lolling in detached groups, and singing or drinking according to the humour of the moment. Pierre pointed out the Chief, sitting apart, apparently in deep thought, but the time of action was arrived. The officer

sent Balfour with four of his men to an opposite point in order to distract the attention of the banditti by the discharge of fire arms from different quarters, and when they had reached it, the first volley was fired by himself and the remaining four. The alarm and uproar were great. The robbers rushed to their arms, but a second volley from Balfour increased the confusion. The officer's party had now re-loaded and again fired, nor was Balfour slow in following the example, so that in killed and wounded the banditti had already lost half their number. The survivors rushed up the heights to meet their opponents, firing at random, and the voice of their chief was heard cheering them on to the attack. The murderous discharge met them still, until three only were left alive but severely wounded. The carnage was now over, and, save the moaning of the wounded, all was still. It was a sickening sight when the officer reached the scene of their late carousal. Flasks, goblets, and viands were scattered about in wild disorder, amongst dead bodies whence gushing red streams mingled with the wine, and the feet plashed in frequent pools of blood. He searched out the chief. His body was found

half way up the ascent, and even the officer regretted that such a noble-looking fellow should meet so inglorious an end. Of the three survivors two died under examination, the third, whose arm was broken, and bandaged as well as circumstances would admit, was ordered by the officer to be taken charge of.

“ ‘ Balfour,’ he now said, ‘ we have for the present no longer business here. Within an hour we must be in possession of the cavern and release Mr. Merton.’

He assembled his men, ordered Pierre, as before, to the front as their guide, and started on their new enterprise. Pierre obeyed now with more alacrity, as his old friends were on the eve of extirpation, and it might be for his advantage cheerfully to assist the victorious party.

“ ‘ Pierre,’ said the officer, ‘ do you think the noise of the firing would be heard at the cavern ?’

“ ‘ I do, at least by one.’

“ ‘ To whom do you allude ?’

“ ‘ The chief’s wife. Her alacrity and vigilance are surprising, particularly when her husband is absent on some distant expedition.

On such occasions she seems endowed with miraculous powers of eye and ear, and the men have confessed that to her they have been often indebted for their safety.'

"Pierre's hearers seemed deeply interested.

"'Yes,' he continued, 'she is familiar with every pass, ravine and fastness, among these wild, intricate mountains for some miles round the cavern, and the confidence of the men in her is unbounded. There is an elevated pinnacle of rock above the cavern, where, on the most tempestuous night, she will crouch alone, watching Benedetto's return. Delicate as she is, she braves every danger, and nothing seems to alarm her.'

"'And she is probably there now on the look out,' said Balfour.

"'I doubt it not; for a stronger motive than ever will urge her there this night. She has long been anxious that Benedetto should abandon this marauding, perilous life. This night's enterprise was to have been his last.'

"'It has indeed proved his last,' said the officer, much moved. 'Poor woman, there is sad news in store for her.'

"'I have chosen,' said Pierre, 'the most concealed route in order to escape her keen

vigilance which, I think, I can baffle, even up to the cavern itself, which we shall reach in a direction opposite to the firing.'

"The pinnacle was now in sight, and the waving of an arm, at intervals, proved it was occupied by the patient watcher; but the party reached, unobserved, the vicinity of the entrance into the cavern, and lay concealed in the hollow of a rock, while, according to arrangement, Pierre went forward to endeavour to allure the sentry within the secret passage from his post, the officer cautiously following behind, with his ready pistol. Pierre entered, with his wonted confidence, and was, as usual, challenged by the sentry. Their conference was short.

"'Julio is returned,' said Pierre, 'with the chief's answer. Where's his wife?'

"'I guess, still on the look out, as she passed me an hour since.'

"'Quick, summon her, as there is not a moment to be lost, and hand me your carbine. I will keep guard till you return.'

"The exchange was made, and the unsuspecting sentry, as he issued forth, was instantly seized. The officer and his party rushed forward, surprised two bandits, who were asleep



in the larger cavern, but the guard before Charles's cell discharged his carbine, slightly wounding one of the assailants, but in a moment he fell dead."

"Such were the interesting events," continued Charles, "that led to the extermination of the banditti, and the possession of their formidable haunt by the spirited officer. I was awoke by the unusual uproar, which so evidently announced some hostile attack. I heard the ponderous key applied to the door of my cell, and the officer hastily entered.

" 'Mr. Merton, you are free. The banditti are overpowered.'

"I was bewildered with the suddenness of the event.

" 'All your friends are safe, Mr. Merton, and anxiously expecting you. But listen—I will give you a sketch of what has occurred since your seizure in the streets of Milan, in order that you may better comprehend my appearance here. Particular details must wait a more convenient season.'

"He commenced with his first interview with you at the hotel in Milan, touching upon all the important consequences that resulted from it, the interest he personally felt about

you all, and his determination to pursue and bring to justice the guilty perpetrator of such accumulated outrages. It besides suited his own thirst for adventure, and never could man display more persevering energy through the gigantic trials and difficulties, which he so fearlessly encountered, and, at length, brought to a happy issue. Nor was the noble part you played, dear Matilda, at the close of this momentous drama, the least surprising part of his narrative. I ought to have been at your side, but you had a more powerful protector, that Providence in which you ever trusted. Our conference was not ended, when we were alarmed with a shrill scream.

“‘I can guess,’ I said, ‘the source of that thrilling cry. It must be from the wretched widow, so suddenly bereaved of her only protector.’

“‘Mr. Merton,’ said the officer, ‘I never shrank from danger; but a woman’s tears unman me. How can we best console her?’

“But before I could answer, the agonized Ada broke into the cell.

“‘Mr. Merton,’ was her wild burst. ‘They have murdered him. They tell me he lies dead

among the rocks, with no one to tend him. My brave! my beautiful! the father of my child! Mother of God! let me not lose my senses. Who is to protect the widow and the babe?

“‘Think not, dear Ada,’ I said, ‘that you are alone and friendless in the world. Look upon me as a brother. I feel, deeply feel for you, and am not only willing, but able to assist you.’

“The voice of kindness had a soothing effect.

“‘It is true,’ I continued, ‘that your husband has, at length, closed his lawless career. He has yielded his forfeit life to that justice which he has long so daringly defied. Be it your consolation, Ada, that your dream has happily not been realized. He might have been executed, a public spectacle, amidst a shouting rabble.’

“Ada shuddered.

“‘At early dawn,’ I continued, ‘I will accompany you, with the consent of this officer, to the scene of conflict. Your husband shall be decently interred, and I will weep, with you, over his grave.’

“Her features grew more calm, and tears came to her relief. At that moment, the page entered, unobserved by her, with the sleeping child in his arms. I took advantage of it, and lifting up the child,

“‘Look, dear Ada,’ I said, ‘is not your life valuable? Where can this babe better look for protection, than to its own mother? It would be lost without you.’

“Other feelings seemed to rush over her heart, at the sight of the child, and she pressed it closely to her bosom.

“‘You had better lead her away, Mr. Merton,’ said the officer, ‘to her own apartment, and whatever arrangements you make respecting her, shall receive my sanction.’

“I was surprised at the almost magnificent decorations of the apartment, to which the page conducted us. It was lighted by a large silver lamp, suspended from above, silk hangings covered the walls, and tables, on which books and papers were carelessly strewn, here and there a musical instrument, mixed with paintings, richly framed, and coloured drawings, a copy of one of which was in progress, attested the gentle taste of the occupants. The page

retired behind the hangings, which, I judged, concealed the entrance to the sleeping room, and we were left together.

“The sudden deprivation of one so loved was, as might be expected, the sad theme on which she still lingered.

“‘This was to have been the last, Mr. Merton, of his plundering expeditions. Oh, why did I suffer him to depart? I felt a presentiment that something fatal would happen, and yet I hesitated. The coming dawn was to have brought brighter prospects than to weep over his grave. We were to have bade adieu together, and for ever, to this gloomy prison, and retired, probably, in my own loved island, to a life of usefulness and repose.’

“I interrupted her not at first, in thus giving vent to her sorrow; but gradually I drew her attention from it. I talked of friends of her own sex to whom I would introduce her; I talked of you, sweet coz.—of Madame, of Emily, of Louise, till she became interested as I went on. I dwelt upon the bitter trials and hourly peril of life to which you have been exposed from the fiendish spirit of this impostor Count, which ceased not to the closing moment

of his existence. She attended to me with a patient interest which for awhile stole her from her own sorrows.

“‘My own violent seizure at Milan, and my imprisonment here are the fruits of his outrageous daring; yet Ada, good sometime arises unexpectedly from evil.’

“‘I understand you, Mr. Merton. Yes, what should I have been without you? You are here to protect and console the lonely one, and my poor shattered heart has room for gratitude. But will these dear ladies receive me with the same kindness—will they love me? Oh, they must turn away from the bandit’s widow as from a contaminated being.’

“‘Not so, dear Ada. They may receive you at first for my sake; but will soon learn to love you for your own. But it cannot be far from day. I will now leave you, in order to prepare for the mournful duties in contemplation. Expect me again shortly.’

“I had again occasion to admire the activity and forethought of the officer. He had already despatched a party of his men to the scene of slaughter, with instructions to make a general grave for the robbers who had fallen, and



decently inter them therein ; but to prepare a separate one apart, for the regretted chief.

“ ‘ I have provided a sort of palanquin, Mr. Merton, for the poor lady, and the bearers are now ready. Yourself and Balfour shall attend her ; probably, the sight of me might embitter her feelings.’

“ I was gratified with this manly expression of considerate kindness for the afflicted widow. I had now a living proof before me that even a feminine gentleness of heart, and ready sympathy with the children of affliction are not incompatible with the strictest severity of duty. Balfour and myself followed the palanquin in silence, and the sobs of the mourner were distinctly audible. The mountain breeze, at that early hour, blew keen and chill, and as I wrapt my cloak about me, I could not help thinking into what a singular position I was unexpectedly thrown, and how little I dreamt, when I left England, that I should become a principal actor in so deep a tragedy. When we reached the scene of blood, the bodies had already been removed from the fatal glen, and consigned to their last home ; and not far apart appeared an open grave, at the foot of a lofty perpendicular rock.

Near it, on a detached crag, rested a rude coffin that contained the remains of the robber chief. The men turned away, from motives of respectful delicacy, as I led the gentle creature to the mournful spot. She glanced for a moment at the grave as she passed on, and with her child in her arms, knelt beside the coffin. The face of the dead was left exposed, and the dark locks clustered round his noble features, contrasting mournfully with the pale, bloodless cheek. I left her awhile to her sorrow, her grief was too sacred to be intruded upon, as the present parting was to be for ever. I heard at intervals, on the passing breeze, her cries of agony. I heard her apostrophize his spirit, as if he would still heed her grief; and there were eyes near me that wept, 'albeit unused to the melting mood.' At length, I deemed it prudent to break in upon her, and as I drew near, how thrilling were her tones.

" 'He will not wake again, sweet pet. Why touch your father's face as you were wont to do, to rouse him from his sleep? Alas, 'tis all in vain. He will wake no more, my child, to bless us both.'

" She saw me approach; and a shade, as if of fear, passed over her brow.

“‘Not yet—not yet!’ was her impassioned appeal.

“‘Ada, for your own sake, calm these transports. Let the rites at once be closed. It is time that the men return.’

“She offered no farther opposition, and I led her apart while the coffin-cover was fastened down and the body committed to its final resting-place. She would still have fondly lingered over it, but I conducted her to her palanquin.

“I found the officer actively engaged in the numerous and important duties that hourly devolved upon him. He had explored the interior of the cavern, and its extent astonished him, branching out into various passages that led to spacious vaults stored with plunder of infinite variety. Every vault was already numbered, and his men busily occupied in arranging special lists of their respective contents, after which the official seal was placed on the ponderous door.

“‘Never, Mr. Merton, have I been engaged in any business incident to my profession, that has interested me more than the present. I was ever fond of excitement and adventure, in pursuit of which I volunteer exposure to diffi-

culties from which some men would shrink. I almost love danger for its own sake.'

" ' Yet, you have a generous heart,' I said, ' which sheds a lustre over every other part of your character.'

" He bowed at my remark.

" ' Little was I aware,' he continued, ' when I was summoned to the hotel in Milan, that I should be called upon to engage in an enterprise that presented so many features of romantic interest. And my eagerness to embark in it was heightened by the spectacle of a young and lovely being that stood before me, surrounded by appalling difficulties—her own life and that of her friends in peril, yet supporting herself by her native strength of mind, and appealing to official interference to rescue from probable death, not only yourself, Mr. Merton, but your faithful servants, suddenly torn from them by this robber Count. Who could withstand the witchery of her appearance (such was his language, sweet coz.) and the firm yet modest manner in which she laid before me the startling narrative that so deeply interested me? I vowed, when I left her, never to cease from the pursuit of her cowardly persecutor till I had him in my power, and restored

her gentle bosom to the full enjoyment of that happiness she so nobly deserves. The wholesale robbery at Florence had just occurred, and roused the vigilance of the authorities.

“ We were on the look out for an adventurer, who under the title of Count Trapani, had already attracted attention, and whose particular description was circulated over the north of Italy. He was suspected of being linked with the robbery, and as I also gathered in my interview with the ladies, that he was in the practice of assuming various disguises, I was soon convinced I was on the right scent, every hour the chase grew warmer, and we have thus happily hunted the monster into his own den. How wonderful the last scene of the tragedy, that the fatal blow which closed his career, should proceed from her whom he had so deeply injured, and who must have appeared like an avenging angel to the dying wretch ! There is yet much to be done, and was I free to follow the bent of my wishes, I would hasten to the other hemisphere, rescue the beloved youth from his unmerited degradation, and never rest till I had restored him to the arms of the noble girl who has thus devoted herself to the re-establishment of his in-

nocence, and so gloriously redeemed her pledge.”

Charles was much affected as he recorded these generous sentiments of the officer, nor were his hearers less moved, particularly Matilda. Her bosom heaved with emotions, whose intensity was almost painful, yet their source was not mournful. Amidst her mingled feelings, the most prominent of which was gratitude to heaven for having hitherto preserved her, and endued her with fortitude to grapple with, and overcome such fearful perils, she could not avoid a sense of proud satisfaction that she had, as the officer so feelingly represented, now fully redeemed the parting pledge she had willingly given to the injured Edward. The picture before her was one unclouded scene of sunshine and happiness, and tears of unmingled delight coursed down her cheeks. Charles read her thoughts so clearly mirrored in her expressive countenance, and gently pressing her hand as he sat beside her, continued his narrative.

“ ‘The most urgent duty,’ said the officer, ‘which now devolves upon me, is to prepare a report of all the circumstances connected with the late enterprise, to be laid before the



authorities, and in this must be included the depositions of the principal actors that now survive, in order to bring home to this wretched impostor the actual murder of the unfortunate gentleman in London. Be it my care to establish such proofs of his innocence, that not a shadow of doubt shall hang over this important question, and even the most sceptical be compelled to acknowledge the injustice of his sentence.'

"In the name of Miss Godfrey, I said, I thank you for the generous, disinterested sympathy you have all along evinced in her behalf, and more particularly, for your promises of continued exertion. Where could she have met with more decisive energy, or more unwearied zeal which have ensured so brilliant a result? Thanks, are poor interpreters of our united gratitude; but be it ours, in due time, to prove by more substantial tokens our sense of your services, and even then we should fall short of your deservings.

"'Mr. Merton,' he said, and a gloom passed over his open brow, 'you distress me. I almost feel lowered in my own estimation, as I must be in yours, if you consider me so selfish as to have been influenced by mercenary

motives, in thus fulfilling my career of duty. I had more powerful motives. I felt that I was vindicating the cause of oppressed innocence, and that there was something sacred in the glorious office which I was called upon to undertake. Was not this ample reward? Besides, did I not tell you that I loved danger for its own sake? I shall not pause till all the documents are finally completed which will be the crowning evidence of Mr. Mortimer's innocence. The testimony alone of Balfour who was with the Count at the very time, when he waylaid and murdered the gentleman, might be considered decisive of the question, but when it is supported and confirmed by the depositions of the widow, of Pierre, and other members of this extended confederacy, all doubts must vanish before such a blaze of proofs. In two or three hours I shall wait upon the widow, who is already acquainted with her husband's fate, and the downfall of all his projected plots. She is suffering severely in mind and body, and is well aware of her critical position. She shall receive from me no wanton aggravation of her distress, but my treatment of her must depend upon her

own readiness to make ample confession of her husband's past enormities, and any hesitation must be productive of ill-consequences to herself. She is now most strictly guarded.'

"Can it be wondered at that my estimation of this noble-minded man, every moment increased as his disposition thus favourably developed itself? I scarcely think, sweet coz., that my devotion to your welfare can exceed that of my new friend.

"'And now Mr. Merton,' he continued, 'the lonely widow will be expecting you. How can we contribute to her removal elsewhere, for this desolate cavern is now no fitting place for her? In this you can probably assist me.'

"And willingly, I replied, but first let me ask, is her detention at all necessary to your future arrangements?

"'I do not consider it so.'

"Then at once I offer the protection of my female friends, who will cheerfully welcome her.

"'Your decision, Mr. Merton, gratifies me. Go to her, arrange for her early departure. My other duties claim me elsewhere.'

"I found the fair mourner leaning dejectedly over her child, and the page standing beside her. I entered immediately upon the expediency of her removal, confirmed the assurances I had before given her, and that I was ready to conduct her to those who would kindly receive her.

" 'Mr. Merton,' she said, 'doubt not the sincerity of your own heart, which I doubly appreciate in my sudden affliction; but I should tremble to approach your female friends, who may justly shrink from contact with a bandit's wife. Oh, no, I would not willingly expose myself to a repulse, or yourself to the reproach which might naturally follow the venturesome attempt.'

"In vain I strove to combat this overstrained feeling of delicacy, which I yet could not help admiring.

" 'My child too, the offspring of a bandit! It would wound a mother's pride, was he looked upon with indignity. Oh, no, Mr. Merton, I will hide myself where I am unknown, and my child shall never know his origin.'

"In this emergency, Balfour stepped in to my aid.

" 'As it is expedient,' he said, 'that the lady

should forthwith quit this gloomy spot, I know a quiet, solitary cottage, about mid-way in the direction of Voltaggio, where your friends are waiting your coming. An elderly widow resides there with her only daughter, Rose, who is universally beloved. Let the lady be conducted there, and remain till you have consulted your friends, whose expressed assent may remove her scruples.'

"To this arrangement she at length acceded, and immediate preparations were made for her removal. At her request, the officer was summoned, and with an evident struggle for composure,

"'You have only done your duty, sir,' was her moving address. 'I would it had been otherwise; but Heaven has willed it thus. Before we part, I have somewhat to say. In this part of the cavern, exclusively appropriated to our private use, are secret places which even you, sir, without rigorous examination, might not discover. They contain treasure to a large amount.'

"She bade the page take a lamp and show the way. In a remote corner he lifted the hanging, and pressing what seemed the rock, with his hand, it suddenly flew back and dis-

closed a narrow passage, at the extremity of which he performed the same ceremony, and through the opening was exposed a deep recess, the floor covered with boxes, and the shelves above stored with well-filled money-bags.

“ ‘In every division of plunder,’ she said, ‘the chief’s share was deposited here.’

“ ‘You then consider this,’ replied the officer, ‘as your private property?’

“ ‘It might have been considered so once; but not now.’

“ ‘And why not now?’ asked the officer.

“ ‘Nothing should induce me to touch it. It was the fruit of unprovoked violence.’

“ ‘But, dear lady,’ said the officer, ‘you cannot be flung upon the world without resources.’

“ ‘Even was that the case, I would not appropriate the least part of it; but I am not without resources. Come this way.’

“ ‘In an adjoining recess, she pointed to another store, but less in number.

“ ‘This is property which was acquired by my husband in an honourable cause, in his pursuit and capture of the bloody Turkish pirates, who in their sudden descents upon the beautiful and peaceful islands in our sea had



filled them with death and desolation—plundering, murdering, and taking captive the best and fairest. My own kindred were among the victims. Our happy home was a prey to the flames; my widowed mother, sisters, brothers, all murdered by these merciless wretches, and I was reserved for even a worse fate—for captivity and sale in a foreign land.’

“ Her eyes flashed as she spoke.

“ ‘Can it be wondered at that I shared my husband’s indignant feelings? Was not revenge hallowed in such a cause? We devoted some months to this glorious crusade, exulting in every capture of these wholesale murderers, forcing them to disgorge their ill-gotten plunder, liberating captives, and hurling upon this accursed race the fury of our implacable wrath. In one of the pirate-vessels, which we captured after a severe encounter, we found a number of young and beautiful islanders, torn from their homes and destined, like myself, to captivity and sale. The plunder on board was immense, being the produce of a midnight irruption into a wealthy island, as yet unvisited by these wandering barbarians. I announced liberty to the desponding captives, with leave to reclaim their own property; but

among them was a lone widow, still young and lovely, whose husband, reputed the richest in the island, was murdered before her eyes. The shock was too much for her; she was dying when I stepped on board. A fair haired boy, about six years old, was weeping beside her, whom with her last breath she consigned to my care, with a very considerable treasure in jewels and gold, of which they had been plundered, but now restored to her, for the future benefit of this her only child. I accepted the sacred trust. 'This is the boy,' she continued, taking the page by the hand, 'whom I love as my own; and to him belongs a great portion of this treasure.'

"'And the whole shall accompany you,' said the officer, much moved, 'safe and untouched; and may the happiness of your future life make full amends for the past.'

"And now, my dear friends," said Charles in conclusion, "I have little more to relate. I parted with the generous officer with regret, though only for a season, and in company with Balfour, escorted the bereaved widow and her young charges to the solitary cottage, where she was heartily welcomed by the inmates—particularly by the good-natured Rose. Bal-

four remained there in attendance while I hastened onwards, full of joyful anticipations which have been so fully realized in this our happy re-union. Well do I know that you have hearts to feel for others, and am I premature in my conviction that I shall not long remain a humble suppliant, when I plead for the bandit's wife and the bandit's child?"

Some minutes elapsed, after the conclusion of Charles's narrative, before the emotions it awakened in his hearers had subsided.

"Dear Charles," at length said Matilda, "if we had no personal interest in the events just related, could we have been so dead to the common feelings of humanity as to shut our hearts against this bereaved stranger? You do us no more than justice when you assured her we should welcome her as a friend. Her heart must now, if left to its own bitterness, prey upon itself; and it is at such moments of loneliness that the voice of kindness steps in with happy effect, and gradually wins the sufferer back to more tranquil thoughts."

The same sentiments were expressed by all.

"Let her be aware this very day," said Madame, "of our ready sympathy and eager-

ness to prove it, or groundless fears may haunt her."

"Do you, sweet coz., write to her, as your own heart will dictate. She expressed her wish to me, that after her late trials, she should prefer remaining undisturbed at the cottage a day or two, at which I was not surprised. I will send your letter by a trusty hand; and when the required season for composure is elapsed, I will myself bring her here."

And it was thus arranged; but Werner, who, with Mary and Dennis, had been present during the exciting narrative of Charles, shaking off recent fatigue, undertook the mission to the cottage, eager to assist in the winding up of this evenful history.

## CHAPTER III.

THE party were now once more happily assembled together, and the re-union was a source of heartfelt pleasure and congratulation throughout the household, while the alarming trials, which they had providentially surmounted without injury, were again and again canvassed over with that thrilling delight which a sense of safety never fails to impart. But the subject, which of all others, was now the most deeply interesting, and on which the crowning wish of their hearts, the complete establishment of Edward's innocence, so much de-

pended, was the disinterested, the untiring perseverance of the officer.

“Yes,” said Seymour, “such is my confidence, in his honour and unshaken firmness, that whatever he pledged himself to execute I should consider as done. His daring in the hour of peril, we well know; and his ability and tact will, I doubt not, be equally successful in collecting that decisive evidence which will, at once, restore our injured friend without one stain on his fair fame, to his wonted station in society.”

“Even now,” observed Charles, “he is actively engaged in the momentous work; he seems to identify himself with it; and it would be injustice to him, and more than weakness on our part, to tremble for the issue. Tomorrow I expect some communication from him; and, as I look around me, I see only smiling faces, bright with anticipations of a happy return to England.”

“The mention of that name, Charles,” replied Seymour, “reminds me I must no longer be a loiterer here, particularly since your return, and the altered prospects of the future. My dear Miss Godfrey, I have a boon to beg at your hands.”



“Consider it granted, Mr. Seymour, what can you ask which I should be unwilling to comply with?”

“It is to prepare your letters for England. I have duties to perform there; and I have my peace to make where I may prove an unsuccessful suppliant.”

“I understand you, Mr. Seymour. It would be thoughtless even to wish to detain you longer. But why should you despond? And, besides,” she added, smiling, “I will speak a good word for you, and assure her, with truth, that you have been to me as a brother, and that neither myself or those around me, can forget what you have done for us.”

These sentiments were repeated by all; and Seymour felt that he was raised in his own estimation, and that there were duties in this world, the exercise of which afforded more exquisite gratification than the indulgence of sensual pleasures.

That evening he set out on his return to England, the bearer of voluminous despatches to their friends at home, and the general regret was alleviated by the praise-worthy object that hastened his departure, and the an-

ticipation of a happy meeting in England at no distant period.

Even Louise had almost forgotten, in his altered demeanour, unvarying kindness, and respectful bearing towards herself, the gross outrage she had suffered from him.

"By the powers, Mary," cried Dennis, "if that Mr. Seymour, good luck to him, has not given me this lot of money. Was I right in taking it, Mary?"

"Why do you ask me, Dennis?"

"Because, I'm thinking, the kindness is all on his side; for what have I done to earn it?"

"You've found it out, Dennis," replied Mary, laughing, "rather in slow time. You can't return it now, the carriage has been long out of sight."

"And it's only truth, Mary," said Dennis, quietly pocketing the cash. "I'm fast upon getting spoiled, and if the gentlefolk treat me as they do, good bye to plain Dennis."

"Aye, Dennis, think of the old lady at the tower yonder, she offered you her sweet self, and all her money bags; and you might have had a castle of your own."

"Oh, murder, Mary, and what's the use of money bags in such a heathenish country, and

not a chick or child to speak to? You may wander till you're blind, and not meet with a tidy public-house, for a night of fun with your neighbours, over a drop of whiskey and a pipe. Oh, sweet Ireland! and won't you see it by and bye, Mary?"

"Like enough, Dennis; but in your country, they tell me, you love fighting, for fighting's sake; and at your village fairs, you break each other's heads, and all for love."

"And it's all truth, Mary dear; and sure, is it not better than cracking your friend's skull all through malice and hatred, and that sort of thing. In Ireland now, a glass of whiskey cures a broken head, and all's right again."

"It's a sort of knowledge, Dennis, that I have no wish to prove the truth of; but soft, I hear the tread of a horse."

"It's Werner, sure enough," said Dennis, "with the answer from the robber-woman. Heaven be good unto us, but this travelling brings us into strange company."

When Werner entered the sitting-room, with the expected reply, the party were, as usual, engaged in discussing the various subjects of import, arising from the present posture of affairs, but it was suspended at his entrance,

and all eagerly listened, as Matilda unfolded the letter, and read as follows :—

“ And the longings of my heart are granted. I have lost my only friend, for ever lost him, and I thought the world contained not another, who would feel for the lonely Ada, but your letter comes, like the voice of the comforting angel, over my benighted bosom which is yet too full to reply to it in a connected manner. You bid me come to you, and you will all strive to cheer me in my distress, and as I read the kind words, I feel no longer solitary, and even my child, now on my knee, smiles as he looks up in my face, as if he read its altered expression. My natural place of rest is my native island ; but there the groans of my murdered relatives would ever ring in my ears. Since I was torn from thence, the ocean was long my home, and I only exchanged its exciting perils for the dreary confinement of the robber-cave. Of the world I know nothing. My husband was all to me. I loved him deeply, nor did I love him less for his adoption of so desperate a career. He was born for better things ; but his active spirit could not brook, in silence the iron rule that crushed to

the earth his enslaved country. This bold attitude roused the resentment of the oppressors; he was marked for execution, and compelled to flee. How often have I listened to the outpourings of his generous heart till I shared all his feelings, and almost called in question the justice of Heaven, that such a gallant heart should be hunted from society. Yet, I cannot vindicate his lawless life. Long did I plead for its abandonment, and the birth of our child crowned my prayers with success. A few hours longer and we had quitted the cavern altogether, and pursued a less guilty course; but in the midst of these blissful anticipations, he dies a bandit's death and my hopes are wrecked for ever. Even from my window I catch, in the far distance, the lofty white rock, towering above its fellows, beneath which he has found a grave. It is now lighted up by the eastern sun, and it seems to me like a halo of glory that disdains not to mark the spot where sleeps the persecuted victim. But I must now live for my child. I will retire with him to some distant country where his father has never been heard of, otherwise the blush of shame might dye his cheek, should he discover that he was a bandit's child. The

good Mr. Merton may probably guide me in the choice. He was my first comforter in my affliction, and it is his generous interference that now provides for me an asylum with his own friends, whose words of welcome, again and again perused, are a balm to my heart, and gratefully responded to and accepted by

“ADA.”

“These are the sentiments,” said Matilda, “of no common mind. How forcibly—yes, how almost convincingly she does justice to the character of her late husband, and vindicates his memory from aspersion! Still, an overpowering truth will, with the world, neutralize the better traits of his nature—he lived and died a bandit.”

“And of this,” observed Charles, “she fortunately seems aware, otherwise a bitter pang might have been reserved for her. Her resolution to retire to some distant country where her child may never hear the father’s name, we must all approve, and she will be happily enabled to realize any place she may choose to adopt. The treasure, which I formerly mentioned, is under the officer’s care, who will faithfully transfer it, for her benefit, wherever



it may be thought advisable. Independent of that which belongs to her adopted boy, the value is very considerable."

"She is still young, Charles?"

"Only nineteen; and considering the severe trials she has gone through, the firmness and presence of mind she has evinced are surprising; but in a day or two, you will be enabled to judge for yourselves."

"Ada!" said Emily; "what a pretty name!"

Charles laughed at the observation.

"Yours is the age of romance, Emily, and I am inclined to think you will be such a favourite with the fair stranger, that your old friends will be jealous of your neglect."

"If I thought you serious, Charles, I should indeed be hurt by your insinuations; but don't you think you will be in greater danger of her fascination than myself?"

"No, Emily; I shall be proof against it. I am not given to change."

And the remark called up a blush on the cheek of the delighted girl.

The following day, the morning meal was scarcely finished when Morcar, the gipsey's arrival at the hotel was announced.

“The gallant, faithful Morcar,” cried Matilda; “our companion, Louise, in our perilous adventure. Introduce him, Charles.”

“Morcar comes,” said Charles, on returning with him, to signify the officer’s intention to visit us.”

“He will be welcome, Morcar,” said Matilda. “Where is he now?”

“Still with the sick lady at the road side inn, where he has been engaged for the last twenty-four hours.”

“He is indefatigable,” observed Charles.

“In physical powers,” replied Morcar, “I consider myself superior to most men; but I yield the palm to the officer. If he is surprised by sleep, he almost seems vexed at his weakness, particularly when he is engaged in any serious matter like the present. He often employs the members of our tribe to gain information for him, or to track suspected persons, which from our intimate knowledge of the country we are so well enabled to do. Nothing escapes him; from the minutest trifle, which others would overlook, he works out unexpected results.”

“We are largely in his debt,” said Matilda, “for what he has done, and in your own too,

good Morcar. But how is the poor invalid at the road side inn?"

"I almost fear the worst. From her groans during the night, her bodily sufferings must be terrible."

"And probably aggravated, Morcar, by her mental distress; but the officer will not wantonly exceed his duty, he has a feeling heart."

"Of that I have seen many proofs," replied Morcar.

And on turning to leave, as the officer would expect his speedy return,

"Am I too humble to be honoured with your notice, good Morcar?" exclaimed Louise. "Was not I your comrade in the mountain expedition?"

He was much gratified by her address.

"Should it ever be the fate," she continued, "of Miss Godfrey and myself to be again exposed to such imminent danger, may it be our good fortune to have Morcar for our protector!"

Before noon, the officer arrived. He seemed pale and wearied; but the eye, whose intelligent glance was everywhere, was bright with its wonted fire, evincing the indomitable spirit

that disdained repose, and whose sphere was action.

He was warmly received. Every look, every tongue was eloquent with thankfulness for his essential services; but he disclaimed all right, or even wish for such, to him, distressing compliments, and called upon Charles to assist him in their suppression.

This being done, the conversation was eagerly directed to the present posture of affairs, and the information communicated by the officer during the lengthened interview was, in substance, as follows:

“When you quitted the cavern, Mr. Merton, with your charge, I had only the dry routine of duty to attend to. I again more carefully surveyed the cave in all its windings, accompanied by the now officious Pierre, and I was astonished at the surprising aggregate of the treasure purloined from the public, which will now be at the disposal of the authorities.

“The private property belonging to the widow and her adopted charge, still remains under guard, in its place of deposit, and I should recommend its being forthwith forwarded for safety to some well-known banker,

say at Milan, when her future movements are finally arranged. I cannot avoid mentioning the surprising decoration of the private apartments. The inner were furnished with almost eastern splendour, rendered more striking from its startling appearance in a robber's cave, and there were many proofs scattered about, of the refined taste of the inmates. I was, at length, at liberty to turn my attention to the invalid at the road-side inn, and, leaving a guard behind me, I set out with the rest, under the guidance of Pierre, who was eager to gain my good will, and tremblingly alive to every order, being under constant alarm for his life.

“When we reached the inn, Morcar reported that he had taken possession of every article of property, including books and papers, belonging to the lady and her late partner, had set a watch over her chamber, which neither the invalid or her attendant had quitted since his arrival, and that when acquainted with her husband's fate, her illness had been augmented by fears for her own personal safety.

“I knocked at the chamber-door, and desired to speak with the attendant. She came.

“‘I must see your mistress.’

“‘She is so weak,’ was the prompt reply,

‘that the sight of you may cause serious mischief.’

“‘I must judge for myself—announce my coming.’

“‘I repeat, you cannot see her. On my conscience, there has been murder enough without killing my mistress.’

“‘This pertness of manner had not the effect she intended. I saw, in a moment, it was necessary to convince her I would not be trifled with.

“‘Morcar,’ I said, ‘place this woman under guard, and follow me.’

“‘She would have rushed into the chamber, but his strong arm held her back. We entered the room.

“‘The invalid was seated in a large, easy chair by the bed-side. She was very pale; but I saw it was the hue of terror as well as sickness, as she sank back at our entrance.

“‘The urgency of my business,’ I said, ‘must vindicate my intrusion. You are aware of what has occurred.’

“‘She bowed an assent.

“‘I must perform the duties of my office; but will use every delicacy towards yourself in



the progress of my examination ; but any attempt to frustrate my object, will be promptly detected, and involve you in greater peril.'

"She seemed to recover her self-possession.

" ' Your late husband has been long amenable to justice for his crimes. It is respecting some of these, deeply affecting innocent persons, that I would question you.'

" ' Where is my waiting woman?' she said, in a somewhat vehement tone, which harmonized not with her reported sickness.

" ' She is under guard, awaiting my return.'

" ' I must see her—I shall answer no questions except in her presence. I shall be guided by her advice.'

"My suspicions about the attendant were now strengthened.

" ' My business is with you, not with your waiting-maid. Be warned in time, that candour only will save you.'

"This remark was not without its effect, though she said nothing.

" ' I will, at this first interview, confine my enquiries to one particular incident in your husband's career, one of a horrible nature, no

less than murder. Within the last twelve months, you were lodging in Albany-street, London.'

"Her lip quivered. I saw she was struggling to express herself, and I was silent.

" 'Tell me first,' she at last cried; 'a young, talented actress, whom you may have yourself seen on the public stage, named Louise, was torn from my protection at Milan, where is she now?'

" 'Under the care of Miss Godfrey and her friends.'

"I suspected her motive in asking this question, and added,

" 'She was rescued by Mr. Merton, Miss Godfrey's relative, from the violence of Mr. Seymour, to whom you would have sacrificed her for your own mercenary purposes. It was you that ensnared the poor victim from her happy home from the same selfish motive; but she is now protected by her English friends, who possess her full confidence. She is no stranger, as you well know, to the secret actions of yourself and your husband, and she knows too much to afford you the least hope that subterfuge will avail you.'

" 'Speak on,' she said, faintly.

“ ‘You recollect the murder of Mr. Dormer by your late husband in London?’

“ ‘She was silent, as if she would evade reply.

“ ‘Shall I repeat the question? I must not be trifled with.’

“ ‘I do recollect it.’

“ ‘Was he alone when he committed the murder?’

“ ‘No, another person was present.’

“ ‘His name?’

“ ‘She was silent.

“ ‘His name?’ I angrily repeated.

“ ‘Balfour.’

“ ‘You are aware, that Mr. Mortimer, the friend of the murdered gentleman, was apprehended on the spot, as the actual murderer, and is now, though innocent, suffering the penalty of the false accusation, as a transported convict?’

“ ‘I know it well.’

“ ‘Balfour tells me,’ I continued; but she interrupted me with a sudden scream—

“ ‘What know you of Balfour? where is he?’

“ ‘Pursuing the path of honesty, which he regrets having ever abandoned. Balfour tells

me, that your husband plundered the dead body of some valuables, though he was disappointed of his intended booty. Of what description were they, and where now ?

“ There were two rings—one a diamond ring, which, I suppose, I lost in our hurried removal from Albany-street, for I have never since seen it.’

“ ‘ And where’s the other ?’

“ ‘ I concealed it till our arrival in Italy, lest it might attract notice. During the last exhibition of Louise, on the opera boards at Milan, I allowed her to wear it, and since her disappearance, have, in vain, searched for it.’ ”

The breathless attention with which the officer was listened to, was here interrupted by a sudden cry from Louise,

“ She says true. I have it still. I should have returned it, if an opportunity had presented itself; but it may be fortunate that I still possess it.”

She unlocked a small box that lay before her on the table, and drew forth the ring. It was a lady’s ring, richly set with brilliants, and was passed from hand to hand for examination; but Matilda surveyed it with a painful feeling of interest, as she considered it

as an eloquent though silent testimonial, which would come in proof of Edward's innocence.

"Do you recollect, dear Matilda," said Charles, "our visit to the police-office in Bow-street, in order to examine, and, if possible, identify a diamond ring which had been picked up by the servant girl, after the Count's hasty flight from London, at the very lodgings he occupied in Albany-street?"

"Yes, Charles, the visit occurred to me, even before your mention of it, and it must be beyond doubt, the identical ring which his wife alludes to, as having lost."

Charles explained the circumstance more fully to the surprised officer, who, as he made a note in his tablets, expressed his gratification at this unexpected coincidence, which added so strong a link to his chain of evidence.

"Indeed," said Charles, addressing him, "the tact you have displayed in your mode of questioning the widow, has been productive of happy discoveries."

"I have yet more in reserve to acquaint you with, Mr. Merton.

"‘Besides these two rings,’ was my next question, ‘was there any other article of value?’

“ ‘None, except a gold watch.’

“ ‘And where is it now?’

“ ‘Was my husband living, he might best explain. I presume, he took possession of it, as it was too large for a lady’s wear.’

“ I identified some trifling hesitation in her manner, which inclined me to doubt her statement.

“ ‘Have you so soon forgot my caution? Recollect, I’ve proof elsewhere. Your husband I cannot question, it is from yourself the truth must come, or dread the penalty. Where is the watch?’

“ ‘In my possession.’

“ ‘Produce it.’

“ After a pause, she handed to me a key, and pointed to a trunk on the opposite side of the room. I bade Morcar open it. It was closely packed with articles of female dress; but he drew forth, from the bottom, a red morocco case, in which, among other trinkets, was the watch in question.

“ ‘Why did you attempt to deceive me? Why brave a power which you cannot resist? Did your husband ever wear this watch?’

“ No; he has often asked for it since our arrival in Italy, but in spite of my anxious search for



it, I could not find it, having wholly forgotten where I had secreted it, in my hurried packing of the baggage when we quitted London."

"When and where did you at last discover it?"

"Only at an early hour this morning. It was discovered on accidentally opening a box which contained useless lumber, and where its escape from injury seems wonderful.' It was a massive gold watch, with gold chain and seals attached, and I have brought it with me."

Charles observed Matilda's countenance as it was handed to her. A thrilling cry escaped her—a visible tremor shook every limb, and her tears fell upon this mournful memorial of the past.

"This watch," she at length said, "was usually worn by Mr. Dormer. It is familiar to me. He would have exchanged it, from its inconvenient size, had it not been a family relic. The chain too, and seals, well do I know them."

"The hand of Providence is here," exclaimed Madame, "It was not by human agency that this watch was so long undiscovered, and preserved so miraculously from injury. It has

been reserved in safety for this special emergency. Almost at the very moment when its production is so essential to bring this dreadful crime home to the guilty party, the missing watch is discovered. Surely the hand of providence is here.'

"This was the general feeling, and a sort of awe was mingled with it.

"'All my after questions,' continued the officer, 'respecting farther plunder were attended with no success, and I am satisfied from her increasing terror, she knew nothing more.'

"'Among your papers or letters, are there any that have reference to this murder?'

"'None, except a letter from Balfour, which I found too, by chance, this morning. Had I more, I should freely give them up, as I now consider opposition hopeless.'

"I did not wish to prolong this first interview, as her physical powers had already been heavily taxed. In reality, I sincerely felt for her, and assured her that such was the case, in spite of my seeming harshness, which my official duties rendered imperative.

"'Every attention shall be paid to you

which can be consistently rendered, but you must remain here under guard, till you are finally set at liberty.'

" 'Tell me, she said, 'ere you leave me; where is my husband buried?'

" 'At the old ruin where he breathed his last. Think not of disturbing his remains. Be thankful he died not by the hand of the public executioner.'

" A blush overspread her pale face.

" 'But all the wealth at the tower, and elsewhere; what becomes of it?'

" 'Call it by the right name, plunder. It is under the control of the authorities. The produce of his last exploit, the robbery of the rich banker at Florence, will be restored to the owners. Benedetto and his gang are all exterminated.'

" Her despair seemed at its height.

" 'My situation then is hopeless, and I have but one resource. The world and myself must now part, and for ever. I will retire to a religious community for the rest of my days. I pray you now leave me. I am exhausted.'

" I summoned her woman.

" It may be necessary, I said to her, for your

mistress' comfort, that you should remain with her, but I wish to caution you that any outbreak on your part, will subject you to dismissal, or probably worse. Watchful eyes will be upon you.

“But a sudden change had come over her. She bore my reproof with humility. Such is the result of my first interview with this poor woman, which I confined wholly to the circumstances connected with the murder of Mr. Dormer, and not a link seems now to be wanting to the chain of evidence. Your English Court of justice, that condemned an innocent man, must now reverse its sentence.”

A lengthened silence ensued, as the officer, with more than wonted energy, concluded his affecting narrative. His last words electrified his hearers. Matilda raised her look of gratitude to heaven. Was that blessed consummation at last arrived, which in the face of the world, would triumphantly establish Edward's innocence? Yes, the crowning wish of her heart, the object of her daily prayer was now granted, and the return of her affianced husband would repay her for all she had gone through for his sake. Yes, she had now redeemed her parting pledge.

"Though it may not be proper," said Madame, "to interfere, yet can we in aught administer to the widow's comfort?"

"I appreciate your motive," replied the officer, "but your interference would be productive of no good. I am inclined to think that it is more from disappointment as to worldly aggrandisement, than from properly regulated feelings, that she proposes to retire altogether from the world."

"Was the letter from Balfour," asked Charles, "which was also accidentally found this morning, at all important?"

The officer drew it from his pocket-book, and read it aloud.

"Since I left you, I have well considered your arguments. They fail in convincing me, nor shall you longer tempt me. We meet no more. The remorse which embitters every moment, may work a salutary change in me. You have led me on step by step, but my eyes are now open to my dangers, and I have one consolation, I have never shed blood. Your murder of Mr. Dormer haunts me like a spectre. I would have withheld your arm, but I was

too late. If you attempt to injure me from motives of revenge, look to yourself."

"And Balfour," continued the officer, "would never have taken part against him, but he was warned by Fanchon, to be on his guard, as the Count had vowed revenge for his desertion. This letter strengthens me in my conviction of Balfour's integrity as it tends to confirm all he has told me. It is also important as a voluntary testimony by one present at the occurrence that this self-styled Count was the actual murderer. After some farther arrangements I shall return to Milan, and lay before the authorities, this business in its several details. It is probable they may summon all the witnesses, including the widow, before them, but be it my care to urge despatch in arranging this resistless mass of evidence, that no time may be lost in transmitting it through the British envoy, to your Government. If we can spare Mr. Mortimer one day of unnecessary suffering, the deed will bring its own reward."

Matilda's bosom heaved with gratitude for his generous kindness.



“And how can my poor services,” said Charles, “be best employed?”

“In attending upon the ladies, Mr. Merton. I should probably forfeit their good opinion, were I even to hint the necessity of your again quitting them, after your late absence.”

“Our future movements then will depend upon your communications, and we shall eagerly wait intelligence.”

“Not more eagerly than I shall forward it, Mr. Merton. Do not be surprised,” he continued, turning to Miss Godfrey, “if this tale of wonder should become a theme of general discourse—indeed, why should it not? It is not a matter that shrinks from the light, it gains everything from publicity. The world is ever fond of the marvellous, and a tale like this will be greedily listened to, and pass from mouth to mouth, “familiar as a household word.”

He rose from his seat, and bowing to the renewed expressions of gratitude, left the room accompanied by Charles.

Scarce had their visitor disappeared, when tongues were eloquent in his praise, whose glowing eulogy would have covered his honest face with confusion, had he been present; but

never was praise more sincere, or more deservedly bestowed.

"And besides the noble qualities of his mind," said Matilda, "how imposing his gallant bearing, and that gentleness of manner which seems scarcely reconcileable with his fearless, daring spirit at the call of duty! He is the very hero of romance; and be on your guard, young ladies," she playfully observed, "if he should visit us often, it might be attended with danger."

This sally was received with a smile, save by one of her hearers, who sat wrapt in thought, with her eyes still fixed on the door through which their visitor had vanished; but she was roused by the sudden return of Charles.

"Oh, the deceitfulness of the human heart!" he cried on entering.

"Yes, Charles," said Matilda, "it was ever so; but what prompts the remark just now?"

"I suspect," he replied, laughing, "my new friend has a stronger motive for his interference than the love of danger, for danger's sake, which once seemed his exclusive motto."

"What mean you, Charles?"

“That my new friend has a sensitive heart, that he is no more insensible to the influence of a pair of bright eyes than I am.”

“Well, Charles, what do you discover in that—particularly as you implicate yourself? Has he fallen in love with me?”

“He would scarcely venture upon that, after your honest confession. The enslaver is seated near you.”

“Is it you, Emily?” said Matilda. “Are you to be the favourite Sultana?”

“Me! My dear Miss Godfrey, you know I can have nothing to say to him.”

This involuntary expression, so fraught with meaning, the abashed girl would have recalled, but it was too late; and Matilda, pitying her confusion, said,

“Well, child, if I am already aware of it, I must pass on; and if I may judge by Louise’s face which is not, like your own, a rival of the lily, but outblossoms the rose, she will not share your terrors, Emily. Louise, the triumph is all your own.”

But she replied not. Matilda observed with surprise the deep emotion, which in spite of herself she could not conceal, and which seemed scarcely called for by the playful badinage.

Her cheek became suddenly pale, and she strove to hide her increasing embarrassment by leaning over some drawings that lay on the table.

Matilda noted this change with a woman's tact, and in order to divert attention from her, and give her time to recover her composure, she turned to Charles.

"Well, Charles, did your new friend enlighten you more upon this subject?"

"He was so absorbed by it, that he seemed, for the moment, to have assumed a new character, as if his sole delight was to sigh at a lady's feet.

"‘Now that your affairs, Mr. Merton,’ he at length said, ‘are on the eve of a happy termination, you will, ere long, think of returning to England?’

"‘Doubtless,’ I replied. ‘We have dear friends and relations there, who anxiously expect us.’

"‘You are fortunate, Mr. Merton, in being surrounded by those you love.’

"‘Aye,’ I said, ‘and who love me too. It would indeed be melancholy if there were none who loved us, and whom we might love in return.’

“ ‘Will the young lady,’ he asked after a pause, ‘return with you to England?’

“ ‘Which young lady? Do you mean Miss Emily?’

“ ‘No; the other, whom you are so kindly protecting.’

“ ‘What, the pretty Louise! And why not? I have expatiated so warmly on the beauties of my own country, that she looks forward with delight to returning with us.’

“ ‘I, when a mere boy,’ he said in a more animated tone, ‘visited England; but my ideas were then too crude for observation, and I long to be more familiar with that country which has produced so many eminent statesmen and warriors, and whose power seems exerted only to do good.’

“ ‘Recollect,’ I replied, ‘you have accepted me as a friend. Promise me, if you visit England, that you will use the privilege and single me out. I will warmly welcome you, and you will meet with others who, like myself, will be glad to prove their gratitude for all you have done; and probably the soil of England may not be the less gratifying to you if it should be at the same time trod by the pretty feet of the fair Louise.’

“‘I cheerfully promise you,’ he said with a smile.

“And after a close grasp of the hand, we parted.”

While Charles was speaking, Louise, by a strong effort, gradually gained some mastery over her feelings, though his remarks were ill-calculated to weaken her emotions, and she would have glided out of the room, could she have done so unobserved.

It was evident to Matilda, that she had not looked with indifference on their late visitor, whose gallant bearing and insinuating manners were so well calculated to wake an interest in the female heart.

Yes, she had hung with admiration on the thrilling narratives of Charles, which portrayed, in such glowing terms, the romantic heroism, and generous spirit of his new friend, and her admiration soon ripened into a warmer sentiment.

When alone, her reverie was all of him. Her gay heart yielded unresistingly to a dream so sweet and novel, unconscious that its devotion grew by indulgence.

“She wished that Heaven had made her such a man,”



and the blush would deepen over her cheek as her heart prompted the wish. Nor was the fascination lessened when he appeared before her. His commanding presence, his mildness of deportment, completed the enchantment, and it cannot be surprising that at Charles's unexpected communication, a rush of tumultuous astonishment and joy should come over her.

"Charles," said Matilda, "your friend rises in my estimation ; nor do I value him less for having so soon discovered the attractions of our dear Louise. Look up, my love, there is nothing to be ashamed of in the admiration of a brave and good man. And indeed, Charles, he will be welcomed with more than common warmth, should he visit us in England, for not till then can he fully appreciate the momentous work he has been engaged in."

"And must not my humble villa, Charles," observed Madame, "be honoured with his presence? You are all arranging future happy meetings, without reference to a poor solitary woman."

"All in good time," replied Charles. "Your villa is not yet disengaged, and even if it were, you have a promise to redeem, pledged to Mrs. Godfrey, that you would never quit her

beloved child, till you had restored her safe to her mother's arms. Our parting will not be yet. Call not yourself solitary, when you have those around you, eager to contribute to your comforts."

"I know it, I know it well, dear Charles, and sad would be my future life, were it otherwise. But I am sure your new friend will lend me his powerful aid on behalf of a poor unfortunate who is probably still suffering from the persecuting spirit of my late relative."

"I understand you," cried Matilda, "you allude to Baptiste."

"And he shall not be forgotten, dear Madame," said Charles. "I shall see Balfour to-morrow at the cottage. His liberty, owing to recent events, must be considered not only certain, but immediate, and Pierre will only be too eager to give the necessary information."

"Poor Baptiste," sighed Madame, "when he reaches Lausanne, and finds no sister to greet his return, how severe will be the shock! But he shall have an asylum with me, and under my roof he shall end his days in peace."

## CHAPTER IV.

CHARLES started on the following morning to the cottage, accompanied by Werner, to fulfil his arrangement with the lonely inmate, and during his absence, Matilda, while the fair girls were pacing the terrace-walk together, was seated within with Madame. As they noticed the saunterers through the open window,

“What a sweet affectionate being is Louise,” said Madame. “How she wins upon you! She is so timid and retiring that none would suppose she had ever appeared on the public stage, captivating all by the spirit and grace of

her movements. I sometimes think, had I a daughter like her, how her presence would cheer my declining life!"

"I agree with you in all you say about the dear girl," replied Matilda. "She has attractions which few can resist, and if I mistake not, our hero of romance thinks so too."

"Yes," said Madame, "it is this probability that endangers all the fond hopes that I have too hastily entertained, that she might live with me. Yet it seems strange that she should have made such impression upon him, when scarcely acquainted."

"You may think it stranger still, my dear Madame, when I hint to you my suspicions that the impression is equally strong on her side."

She now mentioned the casual discoveries she had made the preceding day, which several trifling incidents had since tended to confirm, but that she had yet given Louise no reason to suppose, she had detected her secret feelings."

"If this be so, Matilda, our new friend must possess increased interest in our eyes, as beyond the extraordinary abilities and zeal he

has shown in our service, he is an entire stranger to us all, even by name. A more intimate knowledge of him, is a duty we owe to ourselves, should your surmises prove correct."

"Whatever may be his origin," said Matilda, thoughtfully, "his manners and appearance fit him for any society. That open manly brow is the index of no common mind."

"Be it so," replied Madame. "Yet the sweet girl's, peace of mind may be in question. He speaks English so fluently, that I am inclined to suspect he is a native of your country although he gives us reason to suppose the contrary. Have you hinted your surmises to Charles?"

"Not yet, as it is possible they may prove groundless. However, your caution is on many accounts prudent, and on Charles's return, we will canvass together this very delicate subject."

"Look at the two lovely girls," observed Madame, "as they stand yonder on the terrace, pointing to some object in the distance. What beings of tender interest! Beautiful in face and figure; yet good as they are beautiful.

May the cares of this world—for cares there will be, ever fall lightly upon them !”

“Equally beautiful,” responded Matilda, “yet how different! Emily’s fair face, her auburn ringlets fluttering in the breeze, what a striking contrast, they now present to the dark features, and glossy raven tresses of her companion, twisted so gracefully round her head! Emily’s slight figure too, yet scarcely developed, her airy movements, how different to the somewhat dignified step, and commanding presence of Louise, scarcely to be looked for in one so young, but doubtless the consequence of her early training for public life! Strange, that from a school of such equivocal character, she should come forth as pure in heart as the fondest mother could wish. How sincerely do I join in your prayer for the future happiness of both.”

The day had begun to decline, ere the returning carriage, was seen in the distance, and Charles’ cheerful voice soon announced his arrival with the expected strangers.

The warm welcome which the bereaved one received, gradually dissipated those undefined fears that still clung around her. Yes,



that world, which her diseased imagination had pictured as a desert, was not wholly destitute of that kindly sympathy, so cheering to the afflicted; and her young companions, for whose sake she wished to live, came in for their share of eager attention, and heart met heart so freely and unreservedly, that she felt she was again at home. Apartments had been already engaged for their visitor, consisting of a sitting-room, and adjoining bed-room, where, after an hour's converse, which cemented the mutual good feeling, she was conducted by the two girls, who vied with each other in their successful endeavours to please. They had now a new object of interest, and to one who like Ada, was so little acquainted with the usages and customs of European Society in its domestic retirement, their kindness was gratefully welcome.

During their absence, Matilda embraced the opportunity to state to Charles the purport of her late conversation with Madame, and her reasons for the suspicions which she herself entertained, that Louise already felt a preference for their new friend.

Charles was thoughtful a few moments.

“Listen,” at length he said, “to what passed

between Balfour and myself respecting him, though it tends little to clear our doubts, but rather bewilders the more. After some conversation, respecting Baptiste, about whose immediate release he is sanguine ! I asked him how long he had known the officer ; and where was their first meeting ?

“ ‘ It was about three years ago,’ he replied. ‘ I was crossing the Alpine passes, with another of our tribe, by an unfrequented route, and we chanced to be seated beside a brawling torrent, for rest and refreshment. While thus engaged, we observed, at some distance, a man leisurely approaching us. As he drew near, he stopped short, on observing us, but, at length, joined us. He was young, evidently a foreigner, from his imperfect Italian, and did not hesitate to accept my invitation to share our meal. I was pleased with the confidence he reposed in us, and met his advances with equal frankness. He carried a gun, and was attended by a noble-looking dog, that watched us with a sort of fierce vigilance, till apparently satisfied that his master was in no danger from his new associates, he settled down quietly at his feet. He told us, that he was one of those restless

beings that hated the monotony of home, and was never more happy than when roaming alone in these wild solitudes, that he had left his native country to wander through Europe, wherever chance or inclination led him, with no companions, but his faithful dog and his gun.'

" 'You don't seem inured to hardship,' I said. 'You are born for better things than idly wasting your youth in such a profitless career. But it is probably only a temporary whim, which will soon expire of itself.'

" 'No, I have no home but the world.'

" 'What, is there not one that you regret having left behind?'

" I saw his lip quiver at this remark; but he did not reply to it. He began to question me about the wild Alps, and my own mode of life. I openly told him that I was one of the houseless tribe by profession, that myself and comrade were gipsies, and familiar with most of the countries of Europe. He enquired about our customs and usages, and appeared to feel more than common interest in my explanations, which, I thought, were working some sudden revolution in his mind.

“ ‘ Who is your chief ? ’ he at length asked ;  
‘ and where is he now ? ’

“ ‘ We have a queen, whom we all respect, named Fanchon. She is a mother to us all, kind and gentle in her rule, and a terror only to the immoral.’

“ ‘ And where is she now ? ’

“ ‘ In France, among the mountains, near Grenoble, with some of our tribe. It is one of her favorite haunts.’

“ ‘ And why are you thus distant from her ? ’

“ ‘ One of the great ladies of Grenoble, who favored Fanchon, was robbed of some jewels she highly valued. She suspected some of us, and sent for Fanchon to communicate her loss. We were all mustered, and one was missing, a wild, reckless fellow. Search was made for him ; notice was sent to all our scattered parties, with the name and description of the fugitive, and after a lapse of two months, he was traced to the Alps, and seen lurking not far from hence. We are now in pursuit. Will you join us ? ’

“ ‘ It is an honest business,’ he eagerly replied, ‘ and I will.’

“ I was delighted with my new companion.

In all the difficulties, and, indeed, dangers attending the chase of the culprit, he was ever alert and cheerful, and I thought, at times, perilled his life wantonly, but his dog was constantly at his heels, and once saved him, as he was crossing a swollen torrent. The animal seemed to understand, by some strange instinct, the object of our pursuit, and his pleasure at our success was equal to our own. I entrusted the captured wretch to my comrade, to be conveyed to Grenoble, assisted by two of our tribe, whom we had fallen in with, and accompanied my new associate on a more extended ramble, to visit some places of interest, under a promise that he would return with me to our head quarters. I daily became more attached to him. He called himself Herbert; but there was an additional name on the collar of his dog, which I cannot now recollect. His curiosity was never satisfied; he was proof against all fatigue, in gratifying his thirst for novelty, and though I had long been hardened by exercise and exposure to all weathers, he, at length, rivalled me in patient endurance. Our bed was some chance nook where we sheltered at nightfall; and during these bivouacs I, sometimes, heard my com-

panion talking to his dog about some object of deep interest they had been compelled to leave behind, and the intelligent brute seemed to comprehend him, and answered with a low whine.

“We had wandered over the north of Italy, as far as Florence, and were approaching Parma, on our way to France, when we reached a plain, which seemed all alive with human heads, as the population were celebrating a festival in honour of their patron saint. It was a general holiday, and we mingled with the crowd, as the brilliant novelty of the sight delighted my companion.

“At length, we turned to continue our route, but the dog was missing. We searched through the dense multitude, we enquired, we described the dog, but all seemed too much engrossed to listen to us. Herbert’s alarm for his safety seemed to master his reason. We hired people to look out for him; the night approached, and the loved beast was not yet forthcoming. We lingered in the adjoining village through the night, still enquiring, as opportunity offered, and, with the dawn, renewed our search. I pitied Herbert’s distress, he was almost beside



himself, and he swore never to leave the neighbourhood till he had recovered his faithful, honest friend, dead or alive. It chanced that some boys, tempted by the reward, had, by perseverance, discovered some clue to the dog. It had been seen, at the close of the festival, in the possession of some of the servants of a certain Count, whose villa was within a short distance.

“It seems, the dog had also missed his master, had hunted him through the crowd, and his beauty and anxious whine had attracted notice.

“At this intelligence, Herbert became calm and collected; he enquired the character of the Count, and learned that he was proud and imperious to his dependents, and universally disliked.

“‘Now, Balfour,’ he said, ‘we will call upon this haughty Count; but must first be prepared for all emergencies, by providing ourselves with weapons.’

“We reached the splendid villa. Herbert rang at the outer gate, and, at length, a servant appeared.

“‘I am,’ said Herbert, ‘the owner of a dog

which I lost in the crowd yesterday. I am told it was seen in possession of some of the Count's servants. If the dog is here, I wish to have it restored.'

"The servant cast a supercilious look on us both, and closed the gate without a word. Herbert was enraged at such treatment, and in a few minutes again rang violently. We waited for some time to no purpose. We skirted the premises, and on reaching the rear, Herbert applied his whistle to his mouth, the shrill note of which was so familiar to his dog. At the sound there rose a continuous, quick bark. Herbert knew it well, it was the response of his missing friend, to his master's call.

"'Poor fellow,' cried my delighted companion; 'not the Count himself, with all his household at his heels, shall detain thee from me.'

"He sprang over the wall, and I eagerly followed. We found ourselves in a shrubbery, through which a winding road led to the house on reaching which, we perceived two men, who were walking leisurely in deep discourse, but on seeing us, stood still.

“‘I would speak,’ said Herbert, respectfully, ‘with the master of the house.’

“‘Well, fellow,’ said one, ‘I am the master, what is your object?’

“Herbert explained it, as well as the impertinence of the servant.

“‘My servant,’ he haughtily replied, ‘was right. How did you gain admittance.’

“‘The mode of my entry must be attributed to your servants. Teach them better.’

“The Count’s eyes flashed, he beckoned to some one within, and two servants appeared.

“‘Turn these fellows out; their object may be robbery.’

“One of them seized Herbert by the collar, but in a moment he was level with the ground.

“‘Bring my weapons,’ exclaimed the furious Count.

“As he hastily seized them.

“‘Stay,’ said Herbert, ‘Before you commit yourself, I will repeat the cause of my coming. I have lost my dog, which I value as my life. That dog is here. I demand it.’

“‘Villain, how know you this?’

“Herbert blew his whistle, and the animal’s cry was heard in answer.

“Do you hear it?” he cried; ‘that is the voice of my dog to his master’s call.”

“The Count was bewildered, and his companion talked aside with him for a short time, when the Count went into the house. Then turning to Herbert.

“‘It is not denied that your dog is here. Quit the premises quietly, after which it shall be immediately restored to you.’

“This promise was so calmly given, that we retired forthwith, and waited without for its fulfilment. In a few minutes something was flung over the wall, and fell heavy at our feet. It was the poor dog, but in what a state! his throat was cut, the blood streaming from the wound, he looked wistfully a moment in his loved master’s face, and he was dead. Herbert groaned in agony.

“‘I will revenge thee,’ was his only cry.

“Like lightning we sprang over the wall, and again encountered the Count in front of the villa.

“‘Murderer!’ exclaimed Herbert, his drawn sword in his hand; ‘thy life shall answer the barbarous deed.’

“ ‘I will not soil my weapon,’ was the sarcastic reply, ‘with the blood of houseless trampers. Were you of gentle blood, I might venture without disgrace.’

“ ‘Villain,’ cried Herbert, ‘the blood in your veins is not more pure than mine. Fight, or be branded with a coward’s infamy.’

“In a moment their blades were crossed, and after a few lunges, Herbert passed his sword through the Count’s body, and he fell dead. The house was alarmed, the servants rushed forth, but we broke through all opposition, leaped the wall and soon left the scene of blood far behind us. We were surprised there was no attempt at pursuit, but I afterwards learned that the household were so struck with the noble conduct of Herbert and his romantic attachment to his faithful dog, that they one and all refused to move; more particularly to revenge the death of one who had ever been to them a harsh, unfeeling master.

“The heroism which my companion displayed in this singular adventure, even now excites my admiration. There was a native dignity in his manner, that proved the correctness of his assertion that he was of gentle blood. Still he mourned the loss of his murdered friend, it

seemed as if his memory grew dearer every day; but it was at night that he missed him the most, when they used to lie down together, as if they were the whole world to each other. But gradually he became more reconciled to the past, his eagerness for novelty and adventure, again revived, and I thankfully noticed the change which at one time I almost despaired of witnessing. We continued our route towards France, and reached the Alpine district, beyond Turin, and my companion seemed to linger among their mountain passes, as if he was unwilling to exchange their wild sublimity for the more civilized region that now awaited us. During the heat of noon, we were leaning against a sheltering rock, when Herbert pointed to an indistinct figure descending a neighbouring ravine, and frequently stopping to look behind him.

“‘Balfour,’ he suddenly exclaimed, ‘that is the man whose capture lately caused us so much trouble. He must have escaped from his guards.’

“His keen sight had not deceived him, and our object was now to intercept him by surprise. My companion was again all energy and it was to his quick tact and cautious manage-



ment, that we at length succeeded in once more securing the astonished culprit. As we were pinioning his arms behind him,

“ ‘Where are your pursuers?’ said Herbert.

“ ‘Far enough behind,’ he sulkily replied.

“ ‘But on this hint, Herbert sounded his whistle which my former comrades well knew, and we shortly descried two men in the distance who, on coming up, proved to be his late guards, from whom the prisoner had escaped.

“ ‘Well may you look abashed,’ I said to my former comrade, ‘for your want of vigilance.’

“ ‘He excused himself by stating that his prisoner had eluded them by suddenly springing over a precipice where destruction seemed certain.

“ ‘Would you have faced Fanchon without him, knowing his capture was of such importance?’

“ ‘He owned he dare not.

“ ‘Herbert overheard this conversation.

“ ‘Is your queen,’ he asked, ‘so strict as to be thus an object of fear?’

“ ‘She is strict, and might at times be

thought severe, but it is indispensable in a community like ours, whose mode of life is opposed to restraint. But we all love her, and her authority is never harshly exerted except for the general good.'

" 'I shall be curious, Balfour, to see your queen, for you already teach me to respect her.'

"In the mean time, the prisoner was complaining of the want of his cap, which he must have lost, he said, when he leaped over the precipice, at the foot of which it would, no doubt, be found. As the spot was at some distance, and its discovery uncertain, I was unwilling to waste so much time, and, particularly, as the cap, I well knew, was not worth it. Nothing, however, would pacify him. He swore he would not move forward without it, even if he was shot for his obstinacy. He lay on the ground like a log of wood, and we were preparing to tie him hand and foot, when Herbert called me aside.

" 'The fellow is obstinate; let him have his own way, if not for his sake, yet to oblige me.'

"I was surprised, but immediately assented.

“‘Up,’ I cried, to the culprit, ‘and lead the way.’

“He started to his feet at the call, and we set off in search of a cap scarce worth the wear, if found. In one hour we reached the spot. Another passed in the search, without success, and I wondered at the conduct of Herbert, who seemed as eager to discover it as the prisoner himself; but he, at last, succeeded, and handed it to the owner. He received it with a scream of joy, and, after examining it carefully, placed it on his head.

“It was now that Herbert explained to me, apart, the motive for his conduct, and when we rested for our bivouac, at night, his suspicions were put to the proof. The prisoner was fast asleep between his guards, the cap was on his head, but bound fast with a strong band. Herbert gently cut this band, without disturbing him, slipped the cap from his head, and commenced an examination of it. He felt a hard substance in one part, and ripping it open, discovered the stolen jewels. These he handed over to me, and substituting a similarly sized substance in their stead, ingeniously closed up the rent, and replaced the cap by the side of the unconscious sleeper.

“He was not aware that we were keenly watching his motions, when he woke. He grasped the cap, looked bewildered at its change of place; but after closely handling it, he seemed better satisfied.

“This clever manœuvre, and the success resulting from it, highly gratified me, as I was aware of the pleasure it would afford Fanchon to recover the stolen jewels; but the merit was all Herbert’s; and I had now a proof, how superior, in some cases of emergency, is a little exertion of intellect to the largest sum of physical strength.

“At length, we reached the encampment at head quarters, and Fanchon was well pleased with the capture of the offender, and the production of the missing property. But when I related all the particulars of my expedition, dwelling minutely on the romantic occurrences connected with my meeting with Herbert, her surprise was unbounded.

“She would have me repeat the thrilling proof he had given of his attachment to his faithful dog, whose murder he had so signally revenged, at the peril of his own life, and the narrative affected her to tears.

“ ‘ Is that he, your hero of romance, Balfour, seated on yonder bank ?’

“ ‘ The same,’ I said.

“ ‘ He is but young, and, apparently little adapted for such hardship ; but bring him hither.’

“ I left them together, and from that day the attachment of Herbert to Fanchon almost exceeded my own.

“ She had herself lost a son, who, had he lived, she thought, might have been just such another as Herbert, and she felt an interest about him, such as mothers best can feel. He had no tie to bind him to earth ; a lonely orphan, with none that loved or cared for him now, and her heart yearned towards him. I was shortly obliged to leave upon a distant expedition, and parted from Herbert with regret ; and when I returned, after some months’ absence, I found that his love of adventure had induced him to join the police establishment in Northern Italy, into which the recommendation of Fanchon, whose useful services had frequently been acknowledged by the authorities, procured him a ready introduction.”

“ Such,” continued Charles, “ was Balfour’s

narrative of his first meeting with our new friend. Every incident tended to throw a brighter halo over his character, and increased my eagerness to solve the mystery that enveloped his origin; but the mystery still continues."

"Your story, Charles," said Matilda, "is indeed no common one; and if I had any doubts, whether he was of gentle blood, I should almost consider it treason now to entertain them. Still we must wait farther confirmation; and, in the meantime, it is satisfactory to think Louise may not have placed her affections on an unworthy object. But where is Balfour?"

"Gone to Milan, where he was to join the officer, whose zeal and energy he shares, in the final arrangement of our own momentous concerns."

"In your next meeting with the officer," said Madame, "I would, at once, tell him, Charles, that Balfour has made these interesting communications to you. He cannot suspect any improper motive on your part."

"It is my intention to do so," replied Charles. "He is a noble fellow, and should



he prove reluctant to admit me to his confidence, I could not attribute his silence to any unworthy cause. I repeat, he is a noble fellow."

"Did you find our fair visitor, Charles, more reconciled to her loss?" said Matilda. "She seemed here pretty cheerful; but that might be excitement before strangers."

"She never will forget the past, Matilda. She appears wrapt in the memory of her husband; and, was it not for the children's sake, her bereavement would be too much for her. Even here, I read a constant struggle within her. She is, besides, bewildered about the future, a stranger in a strange land; but I calmed her fears with the assurance she had kind friends, who would advise and assist her."

"How do you think she would like a residence in England, Charles?"

"Were the choice left to herself, I can anticipate her reply. She will daily become more attached to you all, and should she be compelled to part from you, that dreadful sense of loneliness from which you have rescued her, would revive in all its bitterness."

“How intelligent,” said Madame, “is the elder boy.”

“Yes,” replied Charles ; “nothing escapes him. He is full of curiosity—the sure hand-maid of knowledge. Though scarcely instructed, there is rich soil ready for the seed, and we must watch the growth of this promising flower.”

The heart of the disconsolate widow now expanded to more cheerful thoughts, as she daily felt that the warm affection which greeted her on every side, was breathed from the lips of sincerity and truth. She shrank not from a detail of her own short but eventful history, which was listened to with breathless interest, mingled as it was with novel scenes, and descriptions of other lands.

“Yes,” she would say, when she entered upon the inspiring theme, “my own loved island was all to me ; my wishes were bounded by it—I knew nothing of the world beyond. Travellers called it the flower of the Levant. It was one magnificent pleasure-garden, even to the water’s edge, studded with white dwellings, like fairy palaces, in the midst of spicy groves and vineyards. It was the abode of peace and happiness till the infidel spoiler, like

the burning lava, burst upon our dream, and we woke to wretchedness and horror. The murderers spread, like furies, on every side, and rapine, fire and massacre united in the work of extermination. Night brought no relief to the fugitives; the blazing villages lighted their pursuers to their prey, till the arm of slaughter was wearied, and self-interest at length stepped in to stay the indiscriminate havoc. The young and fairest of our sex were reserved for sale, and crowds of miserable captives were shipped off for a distant market, who even envied their slaughtered kindred. We were stowed in a close, sickly vessel, guarded by our brutal captors, whom we overheard quarrelling about the division of the profits they expected to realize from our sale in the slave-market. The past was fearful to contemplate, the present full of horror, the future without hope, when, at such a crisis, Providence sent Benedetto to our rescue—the brave, the gallant Benedetto. Like the destroying angel, he leaped, at the head of his followers, on the deck of our floating prison, which was soon red with infidel blood, and we were again free. He selected me, poor and friendless, as the object of his peculiar care.

Need I say I loved him? He was to me my all—parents, country, kindred—and I became his wife. It was a dream too sweet to last. Yes, I have lost him, for ever lost him, and—maddening thought!—he died the bandit's death."

The recollection swept over her like a blight, she was in a state of stupor; her thoughts lay too deep for tears; she gazed on vacancy, when Matilda, shocked at the sight, lifted her child to her lips, and a shower of tears came to her relief.

"These recollections are too distressing for you," said Matilda. "Dwell not on them longer, at least for the present."

"Bitter as they are," was the reply, "it is a relief to talk about myself to those who so kindly and patiently listen to me. What might I have been without you? If I had nowhere met with sympathy, my mind would have preyed upon itself, and my thoughts, like pent-up fires in a volcano, would have consumed my very heart. It is a relief to give them vent. Oh, we must not live at a distance from each other. Your country must be my country, and where your home is, mine must be

also, for where, lonely and friendless as I am, can I elsewhere look?"

"And what Charles has promised," Matilda eagerly replied, "we all willingly and cheerfully confirm. You shall accompany us to England, where we shortly hope to proceed. We consider you as thrown by Providence on our care, and we should be ungrateful to that power which has so often befriended us, did we neglect the trust. Look then to the future with confidence."

It was the second day after this conversation, when Balfour again made his appearance at the hotel, with a request from the officer that Charles would meet him at the road side inn, at an early hour the following morning.

"Be assured, Balfour, that I shall be punctual," said Charles. "But what tidings are in reserve?"

"In furtherance of your very pressing concerns," replied Balfour, "I have been deputed from Milan, to summon the unfortunate widow, there to be examined by the authorities. My own examination is already passed, as well as Pierre and others whose evidence was in any

way connected with the murder in London. The widow is evidently mortified at the necessity of her public appearance, and Herbert would have prevented it had it been possible. She still professes herself weary of the world, and determined to retire into a convent; but I am inclined to doubt her sincerity."

"And when does the officer reach the roadside inn?"

"He will arrive during the night, to accompany her to Milan; but ere he returns, he particularly wishes you to meet him there, and at an early hour. He himself appears to have made a compromise with sleep, for he has not known the luxury of a bed since he parted from you."

"May he be rewarded, Balfour, for all his kindness."

"I often think of my past adventures with him," said Balfour. "He is not what he seems to be. He is born for better things than his present slavery, where the gain is all on the other side, and I am strengthened in my opinion from a remark he made to me in parting."

"What was it?" eagerly asked Charles.

"After I had received from him my instructions,



“ ‘ Balfour,’ he said, ‘ the hour is probably not far distant when I shall abandon my present profession.’ ”

“ ‘ It cannot cause you regret,’ I replied, ‘ to exchange a life of such hardship for one of less injurious excitement?’ ”

“ ‘ You mistake me, Balfour ; I am attached to my present mode of life, and shall quit it with regret ; but the causes which led me to engage in it exist no more. When our present adventure is happily ended, I shall bid adieu to Italy.’ ”

“ He said no more.”

“ There is certainly a mystery about him Balfour, and ere long it may be cleared up.”

Charles indeed suspected that the officer’s remark had some reference to his sudden partiality for Louise ; but he hinted not his suspicion to Balfour, who shortly departed to fulfil the duties of his mission.

When Charles had repeated to Matilda what had passed,

“ Your approaching interview with your new friend, Charles, is likely to prove a momentous one. He may have been unfortunate ; but I am sanguine his name will not be coupled with dishonour.

## CHAPTER V.

ON the following morning, long before his usual hour of rising, Charles was on his way to the road-side inn, in front of which he observed the officer, as if anxiously expecting him.

The greeting past,

“Mr. Merton,” said the officer, “the last link will this day be fixed to the chain of evidence, which will ensure Miss Godfrey’s restoration to happiness. How must her noble heart exult in the successful issue of her own blessed work! When she welcomes to her arms the favored youth she has singled from

the world, his fair fame uninjured, and even rendered more brilliant in the furnace of affliction, what a moment of triumph to you all! The friendship of such a man must be eagerly coveted. May I be deemed worthy of it."

"You are indeed worthy of his friendship," replied Charles, much moved. "Shall we not all meet in England?"

"You are probably not aware, Mr. Merton, that I have decided upon the abandonment of my present profession."

"Let me candidly own to you," said Charles, "that Balfour has already hinted to me such intention, and it caused no surprise. Am I correct in thinking that your birth gave promise of a less laborious life?"

"I am now free to confess, Mr. Merton, that your surmises are well founded. My father is an English nobleman, Baron Herbert. I was his second son, nursed in affluence, and little did I, at one time, anticipate that I should voluntarily abandon my country, my brilliant prospects for a hard-earned subsistence in a foreign soil."

"My suspicions are then confirmed," said Charles. "Your rank in life, is much superior

to my own, and I rejoice that you will now regain your rightful position in society."

"Are we not friends?" cried Herbert. "I would almost forfeit my inheritance, rather than lose the flattering pledge you so nobly gave me, when the obligation was wholly mine. You cannot wish to recal it."

"Far from it, my dear friend," replied Charles, "it would be an effort I should be unequal to; but having thus broken the ice, will you not favour me with your farther confidence?"

"Yes, cheerfully," replied Herbert. "Such was my intention. My father seemed equally attached to his three sons. He was of a cold, reserved character, which disposition was strengthened by the sudden loss of my mother, while I was yet young. I felt deeply the want of her gentle cares, such as mothers only can bestow, and I looked elsewhere, in vain, for a substitute. I had no sister, in whose affectionate heart I might have found a friend and adviser, and whose counsels might have given a brighter colouring to my coming years. My elder brother was some years my senior; like his father, somewhat repulsive, from his close, taciturn habits, so that I eagerly turned to my

younger brother Montague, who met me with equal warmth of affection.

“ In due time, I went to Eton. I was fearless of spirit—fond of adventure, even at that early age, and I gained many attached friends. My favorite companion, and with whom I formed the closest intimacy, was a youth of the name of Danby, frank, noble, and generous. Our thoughts and pursuits were the same, and our hearts panted eagerly to rival those tales of heroism and daring enterprise over which we hung unwearied in our hours of leisure. Danby’s destined profession was the sea, and I could not witness, without envy, his joyful anticipations of distinction and adventure in his favourite service.

“ He had been, in early years, left an orphan, with an only sister, whose home was the house of their guardian, a clergyman, in a retired village. To his sister he was devotedly attached, and her many endearing virtues, her personal graces, were the frequent subject of his praise. At such times, his warmth would almost provoke a smile, particularly when he exclaimed,

“ ‘ Would that you could see her, Herbert? You are born for each other.’ When you

meet, you will find that I have not done her justice. Yes, I feel assured, we shall be brothers at last.'

"At length, I yielded to his solicitations, and, the ensuing vacation, accompanied him to his guardian's, to see this wondrous enslaver, who was thus destined to exercise so decided, so resistless an influence over my future fate.

"It was a lovely summer-evening, when we reached the village; and as we passed through the gate towards the parsonage, I was much struck with the peculiar neatness that greeted me on every side; but the house itself enchanted me, it seemed embedded in a flower-garden, the trellised walls were covered with roses and climbing plants, in full luxuriance, and everything around me, displayed the most cultivated taste. My companion watched my countenance, and was pleased with my admiration.

"We had scarcely reached the door, when, through an opening in the shrubbery, I noticed a dark-haired girl, romping, in uncontrolled delight, with a lovely child. Her bounding step, her ringing laugh, as they playfully chased each other, attracted my observation.



“ ‘ Sister !’ cried Danby.

“ She heard his voice, clapped her hands in ecstasy, and, with almost one spring, was in his arms.

“ At the sight of a stranger, gazing earnestly at her, she blushed deeply, and withdrawing hastily from his embrace, retreated into the house, saying, she would announce our arrival to her guardian.

“ ‘ What do you think of my sister ?’ observed my companion.

“ ‘ She is a softened likeness of yourself,’ I replied, with affected indifference.

“ He seemed piqued ; and we entered the house.

“ The guardian was, in external appearance, unsightly both in dress and person, tall, bony, and awkward, yet his genuine goodness of heart, and rare simplicity of character, gradually won my regard.

“ With Danby, his uncouth form and manners, proved a frequent subject of mirth, but it was so sweetly repressed by his sister, that her example and advice awed him, at length, to forbearance.

“ I remained at the parsonage a week,

having willingly extended my visit by the entreaty of my host, who was pleased with my boyish anecdotes, connected with my Etonian career, and the eagerness with which I entered into classical investigations with him which were ever to me an attractive subject. I returned with equal ardour the fondness of one who now esteemed me for my own sake, and our mutual partiality was a source of unequivocal pleasure to Miss Danby, who seemed ever on the watch to consult the happiness of her guardian. He was left a widower with one child, but his trying bereavement was effectually soothed by the gentle, unremitting cares of his youthful ward, who almost supplied the place of mother to his lonely child. Never could domestic arrangements be more beautifully conducted. The fair presiding genius pursued her daily, noiseless round, beloved by the household, and everything seemed done as by enchantment, without hurry or confusion, while she was ever cheerful, her lovely face beaming with animation; or if at any time it was depressed, it was occasioned by some tale of woe that met her ready sympathy and relief. I were more than man could I witness all this unmoved, particularly when

her personal loveliness, the exquisite beauty of her form and face, even exceeded the glowing encomiums of her partial brother. Her voice was music itself, and when, as was the evening wont, she poured forth a stream of sacred melody which thrilled me with sensations I had never before experienced, I gazed, I listened, till my boasted independence vanished, and before the expiration of the week, I trembled at the idea of parting. I shared her attention with the rest, on my arrival—was, with her brother, the frequent companion of her walks; but now a sudden reserve came over her. I was chilled with the thought that her affections might be elsewhere engaged, and in the fulness of my heart, poured forth my hopes, my fears and wishes to her brother. He laughed, in an ecstasy of delight, at my perplexity, assured me his sister's affections could not be engaged, as from the hermit life she led, she had little opportunity of forming any attachment.

“‘But I will be your advocate, Herbert, and the crowning wish of my heart will yet be gratified.’

“The gentle girl, my resistless enslaver as she now proved to be, was at that moment

walking in the garden, and Danby hastened to join her, leaving me in no enviable state of suspense. At length they parted; but as I watched his lingering step and disconcerted look as he approached me, I augured no favourable result from the interview.

“‘Young girls are riddles,’ he said on joining me; ‘they hardly know their own minds.’

“‘Your sister then looks coldly on me?’

“‘Not exactly so. She is reserved and timid and as your favourite poet says,

“‘Would not unsought be won.’

“‘Tell me at once, Danby—does she not consider me presumptuous, after so slight an acquaintance?’

“‘She confessed herself surprised at the nature of your sentiments. She thanks you for the compliment, but doubts not a flame so quickly raised will expire of itself, in the absence of the object.’

“‘I cannot,’ she calmly said, ‘think otherwise than favourably of him; but never will I give my hand, except accompanied with my heart.’

“ ‘Will you not give him hope?’

“ ‘I would rather crush it,’ she said firmly ; ‘why inspire hopes which may never be realized ? But let us change this painful subject.’

“ ‘Why painful, dear sister ? Is he not everything a woman can wish ? Oh, speak at once, and sanction his appeal to our guardian.’

“ ‘She turned deadly pale, and grasped my arm.

“ ‘Such a proceeding would be indelicate without my consent, and I give it not.’

“ ‘She abruptly left me.’

“ After a pause,

“ ‘Danby,’ I said, ‘it would be ungenerous—yes, even cruel to your sister, to remain longer here after this decisive rejection.’

“ ‘Nay, Herbert, I have candidly told you all that passed, and will you allow nothing to maiden modesty ? This must be the first time that the language of love has reached her ears. You have already fixed a day for your departure ; wait till then, and in the interval, something may probably occur which may even prolong your stay. You faint at the first repulse : persevere and prosper.’

“ When we met at dinner, no trace of

emotion was visible in her countenance, and her manner to myself evinced no change. I thought I never saw her more fascinating. During dinner, an incident occurred that threw a gloom over all except Danby. The expected letter reached him, summoning him, at an early day, to Portsmouth, to commence his naval career, and all other business seemed suspended in the needful preparation for his departure. At such a trying moment, my presence seemed irksome; but ere I tore myself away, I accidentally entered the morning room.

“‘I quit this peaceful parsonage to-day, Miss Danby, and I shall ever fondly dwell on the happiness I have enjoyed here. You are silent, Miss Danby—have I offended you in presuming to solicit your regard?’

“‘No, Mr. Herbert,’ she at length firmly replied; ‘I was not sorry to enter into an explanation with my brother, on your account, in order to check the indulgence of a hasty dream, which might cloud your future prospects. Your father has other views for you, more consistent with your rank in life, and you will soon wonder that you attached so serious an importance to our confined world.’



“ ‘Never, Miss Danby. I feel ennobled by the sentiment I entertain for you. I fear it will be too lasting for my peace.’

“ She was silent. I rose to go.

“ ‘Should I venture to the Parsonage in your brother’s absence, may I hope for admittance?’

“ ‘Any friend of my brother,’ she calmly said, ‘I am sure my guardian will be glad to see.’

“ I left the room; and after a conference with Danby, who assured me he would still warmly advocate my cause, I took leave of my kind, unsuspecting host, who pressed my early return. I still clung to a hope that I might not be wholly indifferent to her, and that by perseverance and devotion I might yet gain an interest in her affections. When I reached home, I found my aunt Douglas there with her daughter. She was my mother’s only sister, now a widow, with one child. The sisters were co-heiresses, and it had been already arranged that the immense possessions should be retained in the family by my union with the daughter. Of this intention I had hitherto been ignorant; but now my father disclosed his darling purpose, dwelling upon the brilliant

advantages that awaited me. Of this scheme of aggrandizement I was thus meant to be the victim, and my heart rebelled against such tyranny that would controul the noblest feelings of our nature. I knew my father's obstinacy of temper, and as I was shortly to proceed to college, and the intended match was not to take place till I was of age, I considered it policy to avoid an open rupture with him. Many things might occur in the interval, to defeat the proposed arrangement so fatal to my hopes. Cousin Maggie, as she was familiarly called, was a pretty, good-tempered girl about fifteen, and soon became a general favourite. Even my father smiled at her witty conceits, and she bantered me upon my insensibility to my approaching happiness with such unaffected humour that I could not be offended. My brother Montague seemed her favourite, for their ever cheerful dispositions harmonized with each other. I suspected a growing attachment for I noticed a sudden change in her manner whenever his approaching departure for Eton was alluded to. Two weeks had elapsed, and already the resistless power of love was silently working another change in the future destinies of the family. And now on the morrow,

Montague was to start for Eton, and during the previous day their depression of spirits was so unusual, that the elders must have been wilfully blind to what was so evident, for it passed unnoticed by them. In the evening I met Montague, thoughtfully sauntering in a retired walk.

“ ‘Why so sad, Montague? Your going to Eton cannot be the cause. You will be there in a new world better fitted for a lad of spirit than moping at home. Be more a man.’

“ ‘Brother,’ he replied, ‘the thoughts of Eton delight me.’

“ ‘Then why so thoughtful? I have not heard you laugh once this day, and you seem to have infected our pretty cousin. What’s the matter?’

“ ‘He blushed deeply, and was silent.

“ ‘You would gladly take her to Eton with you, Montague,’ I said, smiling.

“ ‘Brother, what do you mean?’

“ ‘Why, I mean that you are not the first youth that has fallen in love with a fascinating girl.’

“ ‘He stared at me as if he would question me, but dare not.

“ ‘Montague, you love your fair cousin, and

what is more, she loves you in return. Is it not so?’

“ ‘Brother, you mock me, and yet you are calm.’

“ ‘Yes, Montague, and well pleased too. Listen to a tale of wonder.’

“ I poured into his astonished ears my adventures at the parsonage, and dwelt upon the attractions of Miss Danby with such fervour, that even Montague smiled.

“ ‘I love her, Montague, as woman never yet was loved, and though she has not encouraged my addresses, I cling to the hope I may wake an interest in her affections, as her brother assures me, I have no rival, and bids me not despair. Judge, then, if I can witness with jealousy or any feeling of anger, your conquest of my cousin’s heart. It removes one serious impediment to my happiness elsewhere, and at the same time, adds to your own.’

“ Montague’s eyes sparkled with delight.

“ ‘Brother, is this intrusted to my own confidence solely, or may I gladden Maggie with the intelligence?’

“ ‘Tell her all that has passed, Montague,

but let it not spread farther, at least as yet.'

"He hastily left me, and when we next met in the family circle, Maggie's intelligent glances amply testified her inward satisfaction. I heard only once from Danby, who on reaching Portsmouth, was ordered on board for immediate service. He wrote in high spirits, eager for distinction, concluding with a fervent hope that his sister's reserve would give way, and that on his return to England, he should find me at the parsonage the happy and successful suitor. I proceeded to Oxford, and though I had rank, and a liberal allowance from my father, I indulged in no wanton excesses. It seemed as if other eyes were now upon me watching my every onward step, and I felt as if success in my university career might win me golden opinions, where I was most anxious, and tend to realize that dream of happiness which was ever in my thoughts. I wrote to the guardian, confining myself to academical subjects and enquiries after Danby. He was pleased with my attention, and earnestly invited my return to the parsonage. I called on my route homewards. As I entered the gate, I

met Miss Danby proceeding upon one of her daily rounds of benevolence among the villagers. She was accompanied by the little girl with whom I was a great favourite, who clapped her hands with glee at the sight of me; but there was a studied coldness in Miss Danby's manner that chilled me. She said her guardian was at home, and would be gratified by my visit, but not one word fell from her which encouraged me to hope she was herself pleased to see me. She continued her walk, while with heavy heart I entered the house, and was warmly welcomed by her guardian. I was struck with the evident improvement, not only in his manner but his dress. Some powerful influence had been silently working this change which I could not help attributing to the fascination of the lovely being that presided over his household. I remained two hours, and still lingered, but she came not. She evidently avoided me. A year passed away. My Scotch relatives had returned home, and the mutual affection of the young couple seemed daily to increase, and and with a more hopeful result than my own. A second year was fast waning, when I received a letter from my kind friend at the parsonage,



enclosing a despatch from Danby, with a stirring account of his nautical adventures, but the closing remarks more deeply arrested my attention.

“‘I hope,’ wrote Danby, ‘that Herbert is a frequent guest at the parsonage, and that my sister is now sensible of his worth, and returns his attachment. There is none to whom I would with more confidence, entrust her happiness.’

“Every pulse thrilled with emotion at this burst of honest feeling, nor was it lessened as I read my correspondent’s comments upon it.

“‘Believe me, my young friend, I cordially echo the glowing terms in which Danby speaks of you, for you deserve them, and as to the delicate subject to which he so openly alludes, I never suspected your attachment to my gentle ward. If she looks upon you with partial eyes, it would be selfish in me to throw any obstacle in the way of her happiness, though I should deeply lament the parting that would be the consequence, for she has been to me, my sweetest, my only solace since my sad domestic bereavement.’

“I had now a powerful auxiliary. Her own

guardian would be my advocate, and she must ultimately yield. I joyfully replied. I grappled with the subject at once. I dwelt upon my ardent love for his beauteous ward, which had "grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength." She is aware, I wrote, of my sentiments, but looks coldly upon me. I confess myself unworthy of such a prize, and if my visits to the parsonage have been less frequent, I have checked my eager longings from the evident annoyance my presence unhappily occasions to her. Her brother esteems me; you, dear sir, flatter me with your approval, but there, where I turn with eager, yet trembling glance for one mark of kindness, I have hitherto met with chilling indifference. Intercede for me, and if she still forbids me to hope, I will cease to persecute her, and strive to reconcile myself to my fate, though it will be a hard struggle."

"In the meantime, my university career had not been unmarked with distinction, and my name stood high in public estimation.

"My elder brother had now commenced his parliamentary career, and the talent he had already evinced, as a man of observation and business, was so favorably spoken of, that my

gratified father relaxed in his usual reserve of disposition, and I extorted from him a promise that he would allow me to travel for a year. This I was induced to do, as, during my periodical visits at home, he had never failed to allude to my Scotch engagement, and to certain arrangements that he contemplated, connected with it, and I thus gained an extension of liberty.

“Montague had now grown into a tall, handsome fellow, and when he finally left Eton, was to enter into the guards.

“I, sometimes, trembled for the peace of mind of my fair cousin, as I witnessed his manly spirit, and the eagerness with which he looked forward to more independent commerce with the world; but I did him injustice. Her love seemed his guiding star, to preserve him in the path of honour.

“Some weeks passed, and I had heard nothing from the parsonage in reply to my anxious letters. Day after day, there came no alleviation to my suspense, and, bewildered by racking fears, I determined upon personal enquiry.

“I reached the gate of the parsonage, accompanied, as usual, by my faithful dog, that

bounded joyfully up the avenue, so familiar to him.

“I found the little girl before the door, playing with the dog, and she ran forward to meet me.

“‘My pretty mama,’ she said, ‘is very ill, and they won’t let me see her.’

“I was stunned at the intelligence.

“‘Is papa at home, my love?’

“‘Yes, he is in his study;’ and she led me into the house.

“I found him in a state of extreme dejection, owing to the lingering illness of his ward, ‘who, I am inclined to think,’ he said, ‘has incautiously exposed herself to infection in visiting some sick neighbours. Poor, suffering angel! the villagers miss her; and within these walls, all is gloom, wretchedness, and silence.’

“She had been confined about a month to her chamber, and, though somewhat better, was yet too languid to sit up. Though I was shocked with his alarming account, I strove to cheer him with hopes of her speedy recovery, and enquired if he had confidence in her medical attendant.

“‘Our village doctor,’ he replied, ‘though

esteemed clever himself, recommended the presence of a physician from the county town, under whose inspection and advice he now acts. I expect him again this evening; but, though he assures me all danger is past, the fear of losing her has almost bereft me of my senses.'

"After ascertaining the time when the doctor was expected, I left the parsonage, determined to return and question him myself; and, in the meantime, I quartered myself at the village inn, where I was welcomed as an old acquaintance.

"I was seated at the window, when I saw him passing, and beckoned him to enter. He knew me from the frequency of my previous visits to the parsonage, and the cause of the attraction that drew me thither, was currently talked of in the village.

" 'You are on your road to the parsonage, doctor.'

" 'I am just returned from thence, Mr. Herbert.'

" 'And your fair patient, doctor?'

" 'She is considerably better, even since my morning visit, and I expect her progress to recovery will now be safe and decided. I am

aware, Mr. Herbert, of the interest you feel about my patient,' he continued, with a good-humoured smile; 'indeed, we all esteem and love her.'

" 'Was her illness occasioned by attending upon some sick neighbours?'

" 'In serious sadness, Mr. Herbert, I am inclined to think it was owing to some mental shock, which preyed deeply on her spirits. I questioned her guardian, who hinted at a letter written by yourself, which seemed to affect Miss Danby; but he did not, in the least, suppose it had anything to do with her illness; but I venture to think otherwise,' said the doctor, with a serious look, which startled me. 'Medical men, sometimes, become acquainted with secrets, in the course of their practice. I would not wilfully betray confidence; but some evil may probably be averted by communication with yourself. The poor lady was frequently delirious, during the progress of the fever. One evening, I was seated by her bed-side, the nurse had just left the room. Suddenly she started up, stared me in the face.

" 'That letter, dear Guardy, that letter, burn it, answer it not.'



“ ‘Then, after a pause.

“ ‘Must the blow come from your hand, from yours, dear Guardy? You have ever been my comfort; would you now make me wretched for ever?’

“ ‘I could distinguish no more, Mr. Herbert. I do not wish, needlessly, to penetrate into family arrangements; but, although the meaning of her words is mysterious to myself, you may, probably, connect them with some known occurrences.’

“ I had now serious matter for thought and wonder, and was so deeply absorbed, that I was only roused from my reverie by the departure of the doctor.

“ I hastened to the parsonage, where I found my friend in the garden, impatiently expecting me.

“ After mutual congratulations, on the amendment of the invalid,

“ ‘You received, my dear sir,’ I said, ‘my reply, returning Danby’s despatch, with my comments upon his good wishes for my success with his sister?’

“ ‘I did: and placed it in his sister’s hands, expressing my cordial sympathy, also, in your favor; but I am bewildered, in endeavouring

to account for the effect it had upon her. She seemed stunned, as if the contents were of a dreadful nature, and, to this hour, I can divine no clue to the cause. As if by mutual consent, the subject was not again alluded to ; but she became silent and thoughtful, and I, sometimes, surprised her in tears, which she strove, but vainly, to conceal from me. I was shocked with her altered appearance ; and one evening, when she returned from a visit of charity, she was seized with a shivering, and immediately put to bed, which she has not since left.'

" 'The cause must rest with me, dear sir, and me only. She looks upon me with aversion. She will never know peace till I cease persecuting her ; and there is, for me, only one course to adopt. I must quit this place, never to return.'

" 'Oh, not so, my young friend. Why these hasty conclusions ? At least, wait with patience till her brother return. In a few weeks, his term of three years will expire.'

" 'Be it so, till that time arrive, I will struggle with my feelings. Let her not know of my presence here. Breathe not my name before her. Let nothing interfere with her recovery. Her brother is inclined to attribute

her conduct to maiden reserve. I fear, I fear, I have a rival.'

" ' My good, young friend,' he replied with a mournful smile, ' ever since she came to bless my roof, she has scarcely had a thought concealed from me. Harbour not these fears.'

" ' Her brother's return,' I cried, ' will clear all up. Not till then must I return here.'

" We parted, and I was again a prey to that torturing suspense, that sickness of heart arising from hope deferred.

" Montague had now commenced his military career, and, from the elegance of his person, his elastic spirits rendered more buoyant from the dazzling novelties around him, he soon became a general favorite, but his allegiance to the fair Scot wavered not, and to his great joy it was announced that our northern relatives would again shortly visit us. In consequence, I became more impatient for Danby's return, but weeks rolled on and I had yet heard nothing from the parsonage, and as in ten days the visitors were expected, I could not longer endure the agonizing suspense that visibly affected my health, and I again started for the village. When it appeared in sight I checked my horse, and could scarcely

controul my agitation. The crisis of my fate was probably at hand, yet I lingered as if in dread of the result, and with strange inconsistency now wished that I had not thus prematurely provoked the knowledge of it. Influenced by this feeling I put up my horse at a low public-house, a short distance from the village, to the manifest surprise of my dog, my constant and faithful companion, who looked wistfully in my face as for an explanation why I did not proceed as usual to the village inn, where he himself had been always so well treated. I walked slowly forwards and casually encountered the worthy doctor, who hailed me with a smile,

“ ‘ She is no longer my patient, she is handsomer than ever. You will be rejoiced to see her.’

“ My dog bounded through the parsonage gate, forming a strange contrast to his lingering master. The little girl screamed with joy at the sight of her four footed friend, and roused by the noise two figures issued from the house, and Miss Danby and her guardian stood before me. Truly spoke the doctor, never had she appeared more lovely. She did not turn away from me, but offered me her hand

expressing her sincere concern at my altered appearance, and hope fluttered at my heart. But there was a calm collectedness in her manner that spoke the welcome of a friend and nothing more. Her voice trembled not like mine, she betrayed no agitation which might give assurance of a warmer feeling than a common acquaintance would claim, and with an aching heart I accepted the pastor's invitation to his study.

“ ‘ I feel I have no farther business here,’ I said, when we were together, ‘ her reception of me is too eloquent to be mistaken.’ ”

“ ‘ My dear young friend, she has never unburthened her bosom to me, nor can I otherwise read her thoughts except as they may influence her conduct. When her strength returned and she was enabled to leave her chamber, we were seated together at the window that overlooked the garden, and I noticed with pleasure her wonted cheerfulness. Suddenly she startled me with the question, if I had replied to your letter? So long did I defer it, was my reply, that Mr. Herbert himself, in order to relieve his suspense, again came to the parsonage. He was shocked with your illness and evinced so much feeling and

propriety during his short visit, that at every interview he rose in my esteem. 'Dear Guardy,' she said, while her voice trembled with agitation, 'you would not recommend anything to me that would again make me ill.'

"There was an implied meaning in this remark, which, though seemingly unnoticed by the pastor, smote chill to my heart. It had reference to myself and I could not be mistaken.

"In reply to her question,' continued the pastor, 'I assured her my every thought and wish were devoted to her comfort, and that I would carefully avoid everything that in word or deed would tend to distress her or renew her illness. 'You give me real pleasure, dear Guardy, and I feel that it rests with myself to prove to Mr. Herbert the folly of his wasting the most precious part of his life in pursuit of a phantom. I am alive to his merits, I acknowledge his worth, but my friendship, if he will honor me with its acceptance, is all I have to offer.'

"I have been thus explicit, Mr. Herbert, though I am aware how severe the blow will be to yourself, and I could have wished that any other hand but mine, had inflicted it.'



“‘Then from her I shall receive my rejection. Yes, it would prove a consolation, for she will kindly soften the pang that will accompany it. Whatever she imposes upon me, I will strive to suffer in silence. Not a murmur shall escape me.’

“I had scarcely uttered these words, when the servant entered, and handed me a letter. The address was in her hand-writing. I sat like stone, gazing at it, without power to open it. When I recovered myself, the pastor was gone.

“I rushed out of the study, and, in a retired part of the shrubbery, tore it open, and read as follows :—

“DEAR SIR,

“There are, sometimes, duties to perform, which are so painful, that we shrink from their fulfilment. My present writing to you is of the number, as it must involve a confession which is in itself sufficiently humiliating, but I know too well your nobleness of soul, your generous disposition, not to feel that you will properly appreciate it. You proffer me your heart, the value of

which I justly estimate, and ask for mine in return. I have evaded your appeal, and endeavoured, by cold looks and indifference, to chill your ardour, that you might transfer that love elsewhere, without wringing from me the confession that I have no heart to give you. 'Tis the truth, Mr. Herbert, my affections are no longer my own. Ask me not to whom I have surrendered them. Such question would be ungenerous and unavailing. Be it sufficient for you to know, I have made this humiliating avowal, in order to convince you that I can only offer you my esteem."

"My fate was now decided. I sat stupified. Suddenly my dog, that was laid at my feet, started up, and, with a bound, rushed out of the shrubbery. I heard a well-known voice. It was Danby, who was just arrived, and how cordial was our greeting !

" 'This is, indeed, a real pleasure, Herbert, to find you here. I hope it is a prelude to closer intimacy.'

" 'I fear not,' was my serious reply. 'Had you been ten minutes later, we never should have met here. This letter hurries me away. But your sister comes to welcome you.'

“I watched their happy meeting, their eager embraces; and it was the last time I gazed upon her lovely face.

“When I reached the public-house, where I had left my horse, I wrote to Danby, enclosing his sister’s letter, expressing, also, my determination to quit England, perhaps for ever, and hastened homewards. There intelligence of a singular nature awaited me.

“Montague had unconsciously won the heart of the only child of a wealthy peer, who had that morning waited upon my father, making proposals on behalf of his daughter in due form.

“My father was flattered by the visit, received him very graciously; and Montague had, just before my arrival, been apprised of the honor that awaited him. This was, indeed, a serious dilemma for us both, and sad news to greet Maggie on her arrival.

“Montague listened with surprise, as I told the tale of my final rejection, which had such an effect upon my spirits, that I looked upon the world and its concerns with indifference. Nothing could now interest me. Even during the progress of my attachment, I was kept alive, in its most trying moments, by the ex-

citement of hope, and the struggles which I then passed through, gave occupation to my thoughts; but now all was listlessness, and a kind of reckless feeling that coloured every hour with gloom.

“Under the influence of this restless inquietude, suddenly I left London, determined to quit the kingdom at once, in order to turn my thoughts into a new direction, and wean them, if possible, from the one all-absorbing subject. I did not mention my purpose at home, not even to Montague, apprehensive that some circumstance might arise to defeat my wishes; but on reaching Dieppe, I wrote to my father, reminding him of his permission, that I should travel for a year, and advancing some plausible excuse for my unceremonious departure.

“To Montague I was more explicit. I told him I had not thoroughly digested my plans, but that I would, from time to time, communicate with him, and more fully detail my route and intentions, which, at present, extended to an absence of some years.

““I shall often think of your perplexing situation, dear Montague; but, I

am inclined to believe, that when my father has lost all trace of me, he will be himself eager to secure the large Scotch possessions, by uniting you with our fair cousin, without any strong pity for the disappointed feelings of the amorous fair one, who, with less delicacy than our first mother, who would not, unsought, be won, sent her own father to negotiate for the purchase of your love. Advise me how domestic matters go on, and if my advice be required, it shall be freely given.'

"I wandered on foot, for some weeks, over the romantic district of Normanby, so rich in historical associations. I had no servant with me; I gradually inured myself to toil, and the novel scenes, I now witnessed, served to divert my mind from dwelling too much on the past, and increased my eagerness for farther adventure.

"When I reached Paris, I found there a letter from Montague, written in that strain of sweet, unreserved affection, which should ever exist between brothers.

" 'My father,' he said, ' was, at first, highly offended at your hasty depar-

ture, without consulting him; but he is so engaged in various matters of business, which seem to grow upon his hands, that, in a few days, his displeasure evaporated, and he seems himself eager to excuse your oversight, by referring to the permission he had previously granted you for a year's travel; but beyond that period, not a day. These are his words, which he repeats before me with more than usual emphasis, fairly concluding that I shall forward them to you. Maggie is arrived, and, like myself, feels deeply for you. It seems to link us more closely together, as we talk about you, and contrast our present happiness with your desolate state among strangers in a strange land, hugging your own griefs alone, without one sympathizing bosom to lean upon. Yet the future is big with important events to ourselves, which time only can unravel. What the effect will be on my father, as the facts unfold themselves, I cannot bear to contemplate; but I will not mar my present happiness by gloomy anticipations, which may not be realized.'

"I pursued my devious route southward, pausing on my way as inclination or curiosity



suggested, avoiding the large towns, and mingling, from choice, with the children of the soil, and, with the means that I possessed, so much larger than my appearance warranted, I had frequent opportunities of making the mourning heart dance with joy. I wandered on till I entered Gascony, a name with which in my heated imagination was associated everything that was soft, picturesque and beautiful. In my younger days, it was my delight to pore over the romantic pages of the 'Enchantress of Udolpho,' particularly where her powerful pen revels amid the glowing scenery of this sunny clime, ere she leads the spell-bound reader to the wilder horrors of the Apennines. The soft and balmy air shed a delicious languor over the soul, and in spite of myself, deceitful visions of joy would creep over me. Oh, had my dream of love been successful! How we should have together enjoyed this lovely Eden—have lingered over its scenes of varied enchantment, every wish gratified in each other's love! I would sit for hours absorbed in these visionary dreams, lost to everything around me, till my faithful dog, who had been my constant companion in my rambles, impatient of delay, would rouse me from my reverie. I

tore myself from this enervating climate, though it required an effort to which I was almost unequal, and resolved to have recourse to active and stirring employment, even if accompanied with danger. When I arrived at Toulouse, another despatch was lying there for me from Montague, enclosing a letter from Danby, which I impatiently opened. How was I astonished at the contents ! The secret had transpired ; the cause of my rejection was now known. Her guardian had won her virgin heart ; he was the unconscious possessor of her exclusive, her devoted love !

“ ‘ When the explanation,’ said Danby, took place with my sister, there seemed something so ludicrous in her attachment, that I could scarcely believe her serious. I reasoned with her, but in vain. The world’s dread laugh she despised.

“ ‘ Mine is not a hasty attachment, brother, it is founded on esteem, and will not be easily shaken. One promise I willingly give you—I will not marry him without your consent ; but no other shall call me wife.’

“ ‘ I removed her immediately from the Parsonage. I called in the aid of a female relative

to rouse her from her delusion, and my unhappy sister is now under her care. When I think of my own blighted hopes, I am almost mad with vexation; but when I look upon the patient sufferer, drooping in health and spirits, I am ready to strain her in my arms and yield to what, I fear, is without remedy.'

"I could scarcely analyze my feelings as I read this affecting romance. Before I perused Montague's letter, I snatched up a pen and hastily replied to Danby.

" 'And can you hesitate? She is your only sister. A word from you can speak peace to her gentle bosom. And yet, you hesitate. I judge of her pangs, of her feelings by my own, and even this unexpected blow I will patiently bear, though it consigns me at once to hopeless sorrow, if I can thereby ensure her happiness. Hers is no evanescent attachment, it is based on the rock of esteem. What though the casket be rough, she has discovered the value of the gem within—a pure and honest heart. Have we not both acknowledged this truth? I have now an overpowering reason for my rejection. What is the world's dread

laugh to her? It is to home that she will turn for that peace and comfort which the world cannot give, nor will she fail to find it there. Hesitate not, then, till the wound, like mine, sinks too deep for recovery. It will then be too late to yield, and you may weep with bitter tears of useless regret, that stern opposition the result of which it is easy to foresee.'

"Having paid this sacrifice at the shrine of duty, and while a glow of satisfaction warmed my poor heart, I took up Montague's letter.

"'Singular scenes have taken place, my dear brother, since I last wrote. My father summoned me into his library: he had an open letter in his hand.

"'I have sore news for you, Montague. Your proposed alliance with the wealthy and noble-born heiress is at an end. I doubt not you will feel, equally with myself, this unexpected disappointment.'

"'What has occurred, sir?' I asked, in an indifferent tone which startled my father.

"'She has eloped (so writes her noble father) with a penniless ensign, whose sole recommendation is a handsome figure. You have

paid her no attention, Montague ; you have slighted her advances, and she has been piqued into this rash step.'

" ' Was such a heartless woman, sir, a fitting wife for a Herbert ? I felt no sensations but disgust at her indelicate conduct. She would have disgraced us, sir."

" ' There was something in my language that did not displease my father, and after a few remarks of a similar character, we parted most graciously. Thus is one impediment removed, which wore a most formidable aspect, and my fears are comparatively lessened as to the future. In the meantime, I am becoming a rising favourite with my aunt, to Maggie's great delight. She was pleased to compliment me upon the philosophy with which I bore my disappointment ; but since my father reported to her what he termed my dignified and honourable feeling, as to the intended alliance, she has honoured me with a larger share of her attention, and has prophesied that I shall shed a lustre on the name of Herbert. One evening, after listening, enchanted, to Maggie who had been singing some of her native melodies, I sat down by my aunt.

" ' Nephew,' she said, in her broad Scotch

accent, 'you have not yet been over the Tweed. You must not forget you have Scotch blood in your veins.'

" 'Indeed, aunt, I am too proud of it ever to forget it. You must procure me a Scotch wife.'

" 'Are you serious, nephew ?'

" 'Indeed I am, dear aunt ; if I have not a Scotch wife, I will marry no other.'

" 'Maggie struck not a chord of the piano, but eagerly listened. My aunt looked earnestly at me, as if she was pursuing a train of ideas which I did not think it policy to interrupt.

" 'I almost wish, Montague,' she at length said, 'I had another child, for your sake. You are like a suitor of the olden time. When I was young, a lover seldom left the side of his mistress. Wherever she was, the devoted youth was in attendance, and had no eyes save for the object of his adoration. Your brother should take his pattern from you, Montague.'

" 'Oh ! too happy brother !' was all my reply, 'A strange sort of happiness truly,' she muttered to herself, 'that consists in neglect-



ing his future bride. But let him recollect the old proverb,

He that will not, when he may,  
When he will, shall then have nay.

“ ‘ She changed the subject, but her words were full of meaning, and her delighted hearers construed them as their own hearts dictated.

“ ‘ I had written thus far last night. At an early hour this morning I was alarmed with an account of my father being unwell. I hastened to his bed-side. He had been attacked by some sort of a fit during the night, which affected his speech. It is now noon, and the effect has nearly passed away. The physician recommends more regular exercise, and less abstemious living. I have been more in communication with him since your departure, and his goodness of heart cannot be questioned, but he must be known to be loved. Sometimes I have thought him harsh, but I now deem it the experience of age that would direct the crude thoughtlessness of youth. As for our brother, you would scarce know him again since he commenced an official. Every day

he seems more formal and artificial, and measures his words as if the fate of kingdoms depended upon their precision. We do not see much of him, and though my father is flattered by his promise of future distinction, (heaven save the mark) yet any domestic virtue he may have possessed seems wholly blunted. The consequence is that my father and myself are becoming warm in our mutual attachment.

“ ‘ On calling at my club yesterday, a letter was handed to me, containing a few lines from Lieut. Danby, R.N., requesting me to address and forward to you the enclosed. I regret we did not meet, particularly as he hinted at the probability of being shortly again afloat.’

“ This was, indeed, on many accounts, a most important despatch, and the vivid picture it drew of domestic matters, roused my long and thoughtful deliberation. I remained a couple of days at Toulouse, and replied, at length, to the various interesting subjects of Montague’s letter, and, with regard to his own immediate concerns, expressed myself as follows:—

“ I cannot help, my dear Montague, coming to the conclusion, not hastily formed, that you will, in due time, reap the benefit of your aunt’s favorable opinion. Her family pride, her native dignity of soul, must be deeply wounded by my continued absence, and my, apparently, contemptuous neglect of her only child; and can it be wondered at, if she adopt some decisive step? Indeed, she is in a truly distressing dilemma, which she has not deserved from me, and, I own, it would be wanton cruelty, was I longer to keep her involved in her present delusion. The discovery must not be made by her; the confession, if voluntary, on my part, will be more respectful to herself, and less humiliating to me. Previous to the receipt of this, I doubt not, you have had other similar proofs of her confidence. Should then a fair opening offer itself, of which you will yourself judge, present her, at once, with the enclosed letter from myself. I have sent it unsealed, that you may read it, and be better enabled to decide as to its policy, and the time of its delivery. When she reads the sad, unvarnished tale of my unfortunate attachment elsewhere, and the hourly struggles

that it even yet costs me to bear its disastrous issue with equanimity, I think she will, probably, appreciate the honorable motives that influence my confession. You, my dear Montague, will reconcile everything. The union of the families will still take place. The original motives that prompted it will suffer no reverse, and the crowning wish of all concerned, both old and young, will be, at once, gratified, for, even from my father, I anticipate no serious opposition."

"Again I continued my solitary rambles. I derived new spirits from motion, as if every step I took, brought me nearer to some undefined happiness; and my dog, ever alive by my side, seemed to enjoy equal gratification. Indeed, his intelligence appeared daily to increase, as if he understood all my joys and sorrows, and, at times, when I was more than usually depressed, he would not cease fawning upon me till he attracted my notice, and I addressed him cheerily as usual.

"When I was fatigued, and slept in some solitary covert, he watched close by me, and I feared no surprise with so trusty a guard. One evening, by accident, I sprained my foot, and

I saw the necessity of paying some attention to it. I approached a lone cottage, in front of which a woman was seated knitting, with three or four children gamboling about her. The welcome which my lameness elicited from the mother, the sight of Carlo ensured from the young group. I entered; and while she was bathing my ankle, I heard their joyous shouts, and Carlo's delighted bark, as he shared their pastime.

"As I could not set my foot to the ground without pain, I accepted the good woman's hearty invitation to remain till I was better enabled to move. We were pleased with each other.

"Theirs was the general history of the married poor; a large family, and scanty means, though her husband and herself laboured hard. One of her children, a fine, rosy lad, about three years old, became Carlo's peculiar favorite.

"I remained two days; yet they were seldom apart. Even at night the boy would leave his own bed to nestle with Carlo, whose fore paw rested over the sleeping child, as if to protect him from injury. Can it be wondered at, when the hour of parting came, that it

should cause some excitement on both sides? The boy flung his arms round Carlo's neck, while the dog licked his face, aware of the cause of his distress, and, at intervals, turning to look at me, as I stood, staff in hand, ready to start. The struggling boy was, at length, borne within by his mother, Carlo slowly obeyed my summons, but it was sometime before he recovered his usual alacrity. I had proceeded a few miles, when not willing to overtask, at first, my weakened foot, I turned aside to rest myself in a neighbouring shade. There I unconsciously fell asleep, and must have continued thus for some hours, as when I awoke, the sun was fast declining to the west.

“A village spire in the distance, lighted up by the setting beam, caught my attention, and I was slowly wending towards it, when Carlo's restlessness excited my attention. He ran to and fro, with nose to the ground, as if hunting on a broken scent, which he seemed to catch at intervals, in a particular direction. At length, with a quick cry, he bounded forwards, and I followed on his track, eager to solve the mystery. I should have lost sight of



him ; but he stopped awhile, as if he had overrun the scent, which he quickly recovered, and was soon out of sight. For half an hour, I followed his route, at a venture, when passing beneath a lofty crag, I heard his well-known bark on its summit. With some difficulty, I mastered the ascent, and there, on the brink of the precipice, lay Carlo, his fore paw resting on his favorite playfellow, the rosy boy, from whom we had so lately parted, and who was fast asleep, though his cheeks were wet with tears. I doubted not that the poor boy had wandered away from his home in search of us, but particularly of his four-footed friend, and overcome with fatigue and disappointment, had cried himself to sleep in that perilous situation. The single bark from Carlo, which was the means of my discovering them, was intended by him for that special purpose, when he discovered me from the height above, as he was now perfectly quiet, not wishing to disturb the sleeping boy whose naked feet he had scented on the ground. I patted the dog's head, in approval of his cleverness, and was considering what steps to adopt when I heard

the distant sound of a whistle, the note of which was familiar to me, being in frequent use at the cottage. Again it sounded nearer, and Carlo noticed it with a whine and a significant look at me. I immediately hastened in the direction whence it came, and happily fell in with the boy's father, who was in anxious search for his truant child; and who can speak his joy—his wonder, as I detailed what had occurred, and conducted him to the spot where he was still sleeping soundly, as it were in the embrace of Carlo! The dog made no opposition, as the father lifted up the boy without waking him, addressing him in endearing terms: 'Thy mother may scold thee, boy, but I cannot;' and after hearty acknowledgments of my active kindness, and repeated notice of the gratified Carlo, he bent his hasty steps homeward with his recovered treasure.

"I continued my wanderings, diverging here and there as fancy dictated, and daily becoming more attached to the free, unfettered life I was pursuing. Weeks passed away, and still I rambled on. Occasionally I caught glimpses of the blue waters of the Mediterranean, and the white sail gleaming in the distance. I thought of the Alps, of Italy, of the

glorious sights that awaited me in my progress eastward, and for the time I was happy. I dare not turn my thoughts to the past: I looked to the future and strove to dress it in gladdening visions on which my imagination might rest.

“The direction of my route was now towards Geneva, where I told Montague to address his letters. The country gradually became of a bolder character—mountains stretching in the distance marked a connecting link with the mighty Alps. I had heard of the Grand Chartreuse—that secluded institution, buried among rocks and gloomy forests, the abode of mystery and silence—and I was now in its neighbourhood. Eager for the novelty which this noted monastery would afford me, I turned from the main road and began to ascend the mountain. The building was yet at a considerable distance, but already massy gateways in the narrow passes, half in ruins, attested the extensive domain attached to the convent. The scenery became more wild<sup>and</sup> and sublime, and so awful was the stillness that reigned around, that at every step I felt its influence stealing over me, and I seemed to be treading on holy ground. It was a lovely evening; I

had been exposed to the burning sun, but now I walked beneath the gloom of mighty forests, between perpendicular rocks, scarcely allowing room for the brawling torrent whose voice alone broke the horrid silence around me. It was the spirit of this place that Gray apostrophized in those beautiful latin verses, so familiar to the classical student.

“ At length, after an hour’s walk, I passed through another archway, into an extensive level desert, and the massive walls of the wide-spreading building were before me. Although the ascent from the mountain’s base had been continuous, the convent was situated in a sheltered valley, embosomed with lofty eminences towering far above its loftiest pinnacles, black with gigantic masses of fir. The breeze blew fresh and chilly. I knocked; a lay-brother appeared, who after a moment’s scrutiny, led me in silence to a large naked room outside the gates, seemingly appropriated to strangers, and rendered somewhat cheerful by a blazing fire of wood. Here provisions were placed before me, and my silent attendant left me awhile to myself. When he again appeared, I had a note ready written, addressed to the Superior.

“ ‘A fellow mortal, who has already partaken of your hospitality, is anxious to enjoy for a couple of days, within the convent, that calm and tranquillity which may strengthen him for renewed intercourse with the harassing cares of the world.’ ”

“ The consequence of this note was the appearance of a monk in white flowing robe and hood. The Superior was ill; but my request was granted, and I was soon lodged within the gates, in the part apportioned for temporary lodgers. The monk had a truly benevolent countenance, that spoke a mind at peace with itself, and was more communicative than I expected. Seventy winters, he said, had passed over him, and for forty years he had not mingled with the world, except during that desolating period when the revolution, with iron hand, crushed the institution and dispersed, for awhile, its houseless community. He acquainted me with the monastic rules, assured me that my wants would be attended to, and that the convent was not without books. I was then left alone. I pondered on those rigid rules, that fearful vow of silence which would imply a constant meditation upon death, and I shud-

dered to think of the terrific nature of those trials which must have driven the broken spirit to submit to this dreadful penance.

“Every eighth day was a relaxation from this vow, and such day would occur on the morrow. During the night, there came on an unexpected tempest, and when I looked out, at an early hour, the dense clouds rested on the summits of the surrounding rocks, hanging like a dark canopy over the convent, and almost obscuring the morning light. These sudden changes, the lay-brother said, when he brought my simple breakfast, were peculiar to this elevated region, and while he spoke, a storm of wind and rain poured their mingled fury round the walls, and ere long the azure sky appeared, and the day broke bright and beautiful. This was the day of exemption. The monks were already abroad, wending slowly, staff in hand, across the desert, to reach the surrounding rocks, and I followed them in their wanderings. I watched their white robes as several climbed the steep, rugged pathways, gradually disappearing among the hollow breaks of the mountains. As I ascended, rude chapels and crosses greeted me at every turn and I frequently stept aside, fearful to intrude upon



the kneeling figures, that seemed however so absorbed in prayer as to be unconscious of my approach. At intervals I heard the deep outpourings of some bleeding heart still writhing under the remembrance of past sins. Apart were seated others in calm converse and I continued the ascent surprised at the vast extent of this mountain wilderness, displaying everywhere proofs of the devotional zeal, and enthusiasm of these lone recluses. I was two hours in reaching the summit, and in my progress, the eagle with hoarse screams, would start from its eyrie, adding to the desolate wildness of this desert region. And there I sat with Carlo at my feet. I was shut out from the turbulent world. Here everything breathed peace and tranquility where the subject of contemplation was eternity alone. Yet when was the human heart ever still, that restless, busy theatre of never dying passions, ever panting for some undefined good, and hurrying through crime and self-created misery to reach the beckoning phantom which only lures to betray? Could I read the hearts of many of these solitary beings around me—what an accumulated mass of guilt—what a black catalogue of heaven-defying sins would be exposed to view, as

might make the angels weep! Oh, there is no misery like vain, useless regrets, when we would recall the past, and undo the deed that consigns us to eternal remorse, but it is too late. The convent bell broke this saddening chain of thought. It summoned the monks to their simple meal. When I reached my room, some books had been already laid there for my perusal which I was examining, when the lay brother entered with some refreshment and bearing, a large book which proved to be the Album of the Monastery. Nor was Carlo forgotten. He had won the favourable notice of our attendant who, as he placed his mess before him, acknowledged his regard by patting the grateful dog on the head. When our repast was ended, I turned to the books, somewhat curious about the contents. St. Bruno, the founder of the monastery was the hero, whose wondrous miracles, mingled with praises of monastic life, invited, but could not absorb my attention. I paid more willing devotion to the album, but this volume did not commence its date so far back as the visit of Gray, but I waded, with some interest, through its pages. Autographs of casual travellers, long since gathered to their fathers, in almost every lan-

guage under the sun, first claimed my notice, but to the names of more recent date, were annexed original effusions in prose and verse, descriptive of the writer's feelings on reaching this abode of silence and desolation. Some were pleasing, principally in a female hand, others were so swelling and conceited, that I envied not the gratified authors, that temporary immortality which they doubtless affected, in recording their names on the same page with many of acknowledged celebrity. The sentiments of the latter were generally concise and interesting, comprehending one beautiful idea, in few words, waking the heart to thought and reflection. Such was the closing sentence which attracted me, ere I shut the book, and to which was attached the signature of an eminent English writer.

“Be thankful, thou who readeest this, for thou hast yet time for repentance.”

“Once more I issued forth eager for observation, when the tolling of a bell sounded near me. Again it came, its echoes died upon the ear mournfully, that I was strangely affected. Yes, death had been busy among these patient recluses. It spoke the departure of a soul

from its frail tenement, to enter upon a new state of existence.

“ Guided by the sound I reached the chapel. The body was laid on a bier in the centre, surrounded by kneeling figures, still and motionless, like statues, shrouded in their white robes, and their bowed heads hidden beneath the hood. The naked simplicity of the chapel, the awful stillness that accompanied this scene of death, the silent monks breathing prayers for the repose of their departed brother, heard only by their God, presented a spectacle not to be looked upon with indifference. Scarcely able to control my emotion, I passed on to the small burial ground adjoining, the closing scene of life’s awful tragedy. Every narrow mound of earth, beneath which a brother slept, was surmounted with a cross. One grave was open, prepared to receive its coming tenant, and others were partially dug, as if the survivors had severally marked out their last resting place, and made it part of their daily business to attend to it. As I stood under the gloomy cloisters ranged along one side, where the monks, during their midnight meditations over their graves, resorted for shelter from the sudden tempest, I pondered on the busy hearts, that after life’s fit-

ful fever, now slept side by side. Whatever was the powerful motive that drew them hither, whether to hold nearer communion with heaven, and to prepare themselves, by undisturbed meditation, for that fearful summons from which there is no escape, or urged by terror and despair at the recollection of past crimes to propitiate an offended God, it mattered not now. They slept side by side, they were forgotten as if they had never been. I shuddered as I drew this picture. Can there be such a one, who, like a blasted tree in the desert, stands alone in the world, unblessed by that cheering sympathy, when heart meets heart, and our joys and sorrows are shared by some trusting bosom? Let such come here and bury themselves in these desert solitudes, but is such a destiny mine? Is every link severed between the world and myself, and could I selfishly abandon the holy ties which yet connect me with society, in order to nurse a hopeless flame which, by indulgence, would paralyze and enfeeble those powers, mercifully granted by heaven for more active and sacred purposes? I felt a sensation of shame stealing over me, at the thought of my becoming liable to an imputation so degrading to manhood, and of

revelling like a sick child, in an ideal world, full of airy nothings, instead of rousing myself from this enervating dream, and weakening by active exertion, the galling memory of the past. This is no fitting place for me. Here I must commune with my own own thoughts alone. Here my mind would prey upon itself, and everything would tend to feed its disease. My safety lies in action.

“I started from this long continued reverie with the reviving energy of former days. I shook off the languor that had been gradually ensnaring me, and impatiently looked forward to the morrow, when I should again mingle with the restless world, and in that wide field of enterprise, crush those desponding thoughts, ere they sank too deep into my soul to hope for mastery.

“When the lay-brother attended with the evening meal, I questioned him whether the superior exacted a knowledge of the private lives of the monks on their joining the community, or the confession, if made, was purely voluntary.

“‘The rules,’ he said, ‘are so rigid and severe, that every applicant for admission is allowed a certain time of probation, and dur-



ing his novitiate, he undergoes the extreme penalty of these rules, and if he still shrink not from them, at length takes the vows which shut him for ever from the world. The cause of his application is confined within his own bosom, except he choses to make a voluntary confession. Some there are whose hearts are as a sealed book. Others are more communicative.'

" 'The poor monk,' I asked, 'who died this day, what is known of him?'

" 'He was one of the bloody actors in those September massacres at the commencement of the revolution, when they rushed from prison to prison, murdering the wretched inmates. I have heard him groan in agony, as he described the scene. They were ankle deep in human gore. It was he himself that headed the maddened demons, that tore the lovely Princess de Lamballe from her dungeon bed, and severed her head from her body, which was treated with every sort of indignity. It was he himself that fixed the streaming head on his pike, and paraded it, with brutal triumph, before the fainting queen. The memory of these crimes haunted him like a spectre. Yet more, he denounced his own

brother, who advocated the royal cause. He was sentenced to the guillotine ; and this very wretch, to please an infuriate mob, mounted the scaffold, and was the executioner of his own brother.

“ ‘ These are crimes,’ said the lay-brother, ‘ which may well drive a man to despair ; but who shall limit the mercy of our God ?’

“ When I was left alone, it was long ere I could forget what I had just heard. There might be others among the community, whose lives would exhibit even greater atrocity ; but the seal of silence slept upon them, so that they were unknown save to their God and themselves.

“ There were here no stimulants to devotion, no music echoed through the naked aisles to animate the slumbering zeal, no attractive paintings, no gilded roofs, no gaudily-dressed images. All was stern, rugged simplicity, nothing to interfere between the outpourings of the contrite spirit, and a pardoning God, and the desert solitude and wintry desolation that reigned without, harmonized well with the gloom of the interior.

“ The time of my departure arrived, and with a blessing from the superior, I quitted,

without regret, this far-famed monastery, though Carlo seemed not to participate in my feeling, as he displayed not his usual alacrity, until we had fairly lost sight of the walls. I once more breathed at liberty ; the depression, during my late confinement, vanished amidst the lovely scenes I passed through, as I continued my route to Geneva.

“On my arrival there, I found, as I expected, a letter from Montague, merely acquainting me that domestic matters had not altered materially since he last wrote ; but the time seemed ripening, he said, for a change, with which he would not fail to acquaint me. I now prepared for my wanderings through Switzerland, and to explore those mighty Alps, whose glittering summits, I had often paused to survey in the distance, and I looked forward, with eagerness, to those scenes of hazardous enterprise and adventure, which might divert the current of my thoughts, from dwelling too intensely on the past.”

It were needless to recapitulate Herbert's stirring adventures among the Alps, and his accidental meeting with Balfour, during his solitary rambles, with the strange events they

encountered together, as they have been already detailed in this our history, in the confidential communication made by Balfour to Charles.

This accidental meeting, as has been fully set forth in our previous pages, had a decided influence on Herbert's future proceedings, as it ultimately brought him into connection with the police establishment in Northern Italy.

We have already shewn the persevering intrepidity he displayed in the discharge of his perilous duties, which not only won golden opinions from his superiors, but had the happy effect of restoring his mind to a more healthy tone.

We have already shewn also the cause of his first introduction to Matilda and her friends, the more than common interest he felt in their service, and the fortunate result of his untiring zeal on their behalf, which ceased not, till, from the depths of despondency, he raised them to security and comfort.

We shall now come to the conclusion of Herbert's narrative, and explain, in his own words, the causes which led to his abandonment of his present mode of life.

“After the short letter,” continued Herbert, “received at Geneva, from Montague, I waited with some anxiety for farther intelligence, and the purport of his several communications which have since reached me, was, as he anticipated, of an interesting nature.

“ ‘My father’s general health,’ he said, ‘appears to be much affected since his severe attack, and though he still mingles with the world, yet, at times, an unusual languor creeps over him, which I consider an alarming symptom. He is become so fond of dear Maggy, and, indeed, she is unwearied in her attentions to him, but, sometimes, turns from him in dismay, as, in tones of kindness, he tells her, he shall join with her in scolding the truant on his return. This suspense cannot much longer continue.’

“Again he writes,

“ ‘One step, dear brother, and an important one, has occurred towards the general development of family matters. My father had retired early last night, and I

was alone with Maggy in the drawing-room. She was already acquainted with the letter which you enclosed to me for delivery to my aunt, on the first favorable opportunity, and we were, at the moment, talking about it, when my aunt entered. After some time, she called me to sit by her side.

“ ‘ Nephew, I have not lately asked you after your absent brother ; the time approaches for his return. Does he allude to it in his letters to yourself ?’

“ ‘ So far from it, dear aunt, he is preparing to extend his tour, so that the period of his return must be yet distant.’

“ ‘ Has he forgotten certain family arrangements that will shortly depend upon his presence ?’

“ ‘ He cannot have forgotten them, dear aunt.’

“ ‘ Nephew, my question involves the happiness of more than one. If he has not forgotten them, whence his strange indifference ? Does he repent his engagement ? From a Herbert I should expect more honorable conduct.’

“ ‘ Dear aunt, my brother is incapable of anything dishonorable. He acknowledges the



happiness which the possession of your lovely daughter must confer upon the man deemed worthy of her, but at the period of the proposed arrangement his affections were not his own.'

"She looked unusually grave.

" 'Read this, dear aunt,' and I placed your letter in her hand. She looked at the address.

" 'This is your brother's hand-writing.'

" 'It is, aunt.'

"While she was intently reading it, I heard Maggy steal silently out of the room, and I waited the result with as much patience as I could command.

" 'This is a confirmation,' at length she said 'of my worst fears. Was it honorable to trifle so long with a woman's heart? You would not have acted thus, Montague.'

" 'Dear aunt, my brother is as incapable as myself of trifling with a woman's feelings. Surely the pain of writing that letter proves it.'

" 'And my poor child,' she turned to look for her; 'has she left the room?'

" 'Yes, dear aunt.'

" 'I would spare her the knowledge of this blow, but it is impossible. Beside the shock

of this unexpected news, think of the derangement of the family plans if the intended union should not take place.'

"I breathed more freely. This remark betrayed her own feelings, and it augured well for a happy result to myself.

" 'And his father, too! Is he aware of the purport of this letter?'

" 'No, dear aunt. The only communication yet is to yourself.'

" 'I must seek my daughter.'

"She rose and left the room. For an hour I paced up and down the room, listening to every tread but no one came near me. Another hour passed, still I was alone, and at midnight I reluctantly retired to my room. There I caught sight of a note laid upon my table. The contents were written hastily with a pencil.

" 'My mother knows all. To-morrow she acquaints your father. Let us hope for the best.'

" 'To-morrow, then, will bring matters to a crisis; and after a feverish night, I rose early. My father, as you know, is generally in his

library betimes in the morning. I watched him enter it; and shortly after, my aunt knocked at the door and was admitted. The crisis was arrived, and my suspense was intolerable. I sought the breakfast-room, but Maggy was not there. She was doubtless, like myself, waiting the issue in her own chamber. At length, my aunt came forth from the library, and I watched her ascend the stairs. My father's bell hastily rang, and I was summoned into the library.

“‘Sit down, Montague.’ and I thought his voice trembled. ‘This is a strange tale your aunt has acquainted me with. My confidence has ever been open to you; yet, your father has, till now, been kept in ignorance of this change, which involves so many family considerations, and places me in a very awkward position. Where is your brother?’

“‘He is in Italy, and will probably continue his travels eastward.’

“‘I was startled by your aunt’s communication, and still more when she showed me your brother’s letter to herself, stating the reasons which influenced his conduct.’

“‘He was silent.

“‘You cannot condemn them, my dear father. The shock he has lately sustained has

injured his health. He has endeavoured to struggle with it, but all to no purpose, and he has adopted the only alternative left him. Surely, my dear father, you cannot condemn him.'

"'No, no, Montague, I condemn him not, as it seems your own happiness is too much concerned in his forgiveness. You love your cousin, and she returns your attachment. Is my information correct?'

"'It is, my dear father.'

"'Well, Montague, I will candidly confess that there is a pleasanter winding up of this distressing dilemma than I anticipated. I give my assent, as well as your aunt, to the new arrangement, and you may communicate what has passed to the ladies, so that we may all assemble cheerfully at the breakfast-table.'

"You may judge how warmly I grasped my father's hand, in acknowledgment of his goodness. He was evidently affected, and I flew to my aunt's dressing-room, my smiling countenance spoke all, and in a moment Maggy was in my arms. Thus you will perceive, my dear brother, the dreaded explanation has happily taken place. There are none but smiling faces around me, and Maggy is now by

my side, giving vent to a thousand good wishes for your restoration to that happiness which you so truly deserve. We all wish your return, but none more than your father, who, however, bids me say he will resign his own wishes if a longer absence will contribute to your happiness.'

"This intelligence from Montague was a source of sincere gratification, as the happiness of the family seemed increased by the very circumstance that threatened at one time to destroy it. From Danby I also received tidings of an event, which though expected and indeed hastened by my own appeal, caused a momentary pang. He advised me of his sister's marriage to her guardian, and at the same time mentioned his own immediate embarkation for a distant service—being appointed to the command of a convict ship.

"It was now that, in duty bound, I wrote fully to my father. I bared to him my whole heart. I detailed to him the commencement, the progress and result of my unfortunate attachment, and appealed to him whether, situated as I was, I could, as a christian and a man of honour, deliberately deceive a trusting girl, and pledge

my solemn vows to her at the altar, when my affections were in the keeping of another.

“ ‘I should pronounce such a one a hypocrite and a villain, and such are not the principles which you, my dear father, have taught me.’

“ Several months have elapsed since I heard from Danby, and from that time I have been actively engaged in the duties of my new profession. I entered into it from necessity; but I soon became attached to it for its own sake. Its constant variety, its strange adventures, not unmixed with personal peril, were of so absorbing a nature that I was won from myself, and I felt increased interest when my services were required on behalf of the unjustly oppressed. Such were my feelings when I was summoned to the hotel in Milan, and listened to the eventful history of Miss Godfrey, from her own lips. It was a crisis in her fate, fearful to contemplate; yet, though surrounded by difficulties which might appal the stoutest heart, I found her firm in the trust of God and her own integrity. I vowed to devote my best energies to her service, and they are happily crowned with success, and I shall ever be thankful for the opportunity that has made me acquainted with friends whom I have been taught to love



and esteem. And now, Mr. Merton," continued Herbert, "will you yet listen to me while I allude to a subject intimately connected with my own happiness?"

"Speak on," said Charles; "you shall find me a patient listener."

"At my first interview with your fair friends at the hotel, there was a young lady seated in the room, whose appearance startled me, from her striking resemblance to Miss Danby. Her face, her eyes, her hair were exactly similar; but when she rose from her seat and spoke to Miss Godfrey, the enchantment was complete. She not only possessed the same tall, elegant figure, but the tones of her voice made every pulse thrill with mournful recollections of the past, and, for the moment, I almost fancied myself again at the Parsonage. It was not a transient impression the lovely Louise made upon me. In the midst of my perilous duties, her image was present with me. The principal memories connected with the Parsonage I strove to deaden among the toils and excitement of my profession; but as the remembrance of Louise came o'er me, I voluntarily cherished it. It came like healing balm to my shattered spirit, and with it came thronging

hopes and wishes, at first of an undefined nature, but daily expanding into maturity. I have again seen her, and these feelings have at length gained such strength and consistency that they have now ripened into a fervent hope that I might win the good opinion of this gentle maid. I have thus opened my heart to you, Mr. Merton, and doubt not you will, with equal candour, meet my question. Is there any favoured suitor that anticipates me in the pursuit of your lovely friend? If so, it would be true wisdom in me to flee at once from the fascinations of her presence."

"My dear friend," replied Charles, "there is one powerful consideration that bids me pause, before I reply more particularly to your question. How would your noble father approve of your connecting yourself with one of such humble birth, and trained in so suspicious a school? Are you aware yourself of her parentage?"

"I know it well," cried Herbert, with warmth. "Oh! she is all purity and loveliness. The breath of slander has never dared to defame her. Does she not live with Miss Godfrey? That alone stamps her worth, and she would confer dignity on any station. I

have no fear of serious opposition from my father, as I will presently prove to you. But ease my suspense, my question is yet unanswered."

"I can safely assert," said Charles, "I know of no suitor that aspires to her favor, and believe me, you have no cause to apprehend a rival. Though lowly born, such is her strength of mind, her delicacy of sentiment, I am satisfied she will never give her hand where she has not already surrendered her heart. I can assure you, with truth, that you enjoy her favorable opinion, and you have, to all seeming, no cause for despair."

"Your reply, my dear friend, has removed half my fears, and when we all meet again, at Milan, where nothing now seems to prevent your early return, I will venture upon my tale of love; and, as I should wish you to repeat all that has now passed between us to Miss Godfrey, intreat her to be my advocate with the lovely girl."

"I promise you, I will," replied Charles; "but your own merit will plead the readiest in your favor. But why do you apprehend no serious opposition from your father?"

"The correspondence has still continued,

though, sometimes at long intervals, between Montague and myself. He mentioned that my father had suffered another attack more serious than the first, and that he had more than once expressed a wish for my return. I did not conceal, from my brother, that I had united myself with the police establishment, in order to rouse myself from my mental lethargy, and he is already acquainted with my meeting with Miss Godfrey and her friends, whose romantic adventures he has already heard whispered in London. Can it be wondered at, that I was also eloquent in praise of Louise? I gave Montague a sketch of her history, of my meeting with her in your society, the impression she has made upon me, which had given a new impetus to the shattered energies of my mind. His reply will solve your question.

“The contents of your letter, dear brother, have indeed surprised me, but have gratified me still more, as there seems now a well-grounded hope, that your mind may, at length, regain its healthful tone. The very arduous and perilous life, which you have

so cheerfully submitted to, in order to relieve it, proves the intensity of the shock you have experienced. That you should be the individual to step forward on behalf of Miss Godfrey and her friends, when she was compelled to appeal to the public authorities, seems designed by Providence, as the events consequent upon it, are likely to prove so interesting and important to yourself. The warmth with which you mention the fair Louise, made myself and my own sweet Maggy smile, and we now consider your recovery certain. True love is ever timid; but the apprehensions you entertain of my father's opposition to your connection with one so lowly born, may prove visionary. His health is much injured by his second attack, and I frequently sit with him in his library, engaged in mutual, unreserved confidence.

“Yesterday, he again questioned me about you, in reference to your long, interesting letter to him, which has roused all a father's feelings in your favor. You confined the subject of this letter to the unhappy cause why you rejected the intended alliance; but our ever-kind father asked so many anxious questions about

you, that, blame me not, brother, I placed your last despatch to myself in his hands.

“ ‘Poor boy, poor boy,’ was his sole exclamation, as he perused it; at its close, he remained in deep thought, still holding the letter in his hand. ‘Your brother has endured much, Montague. I am altogether taken by surprise. The remedy he has recourse to, to regain his peace of mind, is strange; but, perhaps, it was necessary.’

“ ‘Indeed, dear father,’ I said, ‘the severity of his sufferings can be known only to himself; but is it not equally strange, that he should be the hero of this English lady’s deliverance from her almost incredible difficulties?’

“ ‘I well remember,” said my father, thoughtfully, “the unfortunate occurrence to which your brother alludes, and which destroyed the domestic happiness of the Godfreys. It was, at the time, a subject of universal interest; I then understood Miss Godfrey was a wealthy heiress, in her own right, beautiful and accomplished, and had many noble suitors, but was attached to a young West Indian, who was transported for the double crime of murdering and robbing his



friend. He now seems to have been unjustly sentenced. She must be a noble creature.'

" 'And this noble creature, dear father, is the friend and protector of that interesting girl, who has wrought this sudden change in my brother. I long to welcome her as a sister.'

" He smiled.

" 'I do not blame your eagerness, Montague, as it arises from affection to your brother. I could have wished this young foreigner had been of nobler blood; but tell your brother, from me, that even this shall cause no objection, on my part, if his union with her will contribute to his happiness. Miss Godfrey's attachment to her is a sufficient guarantee that her manners and accomplishments must fit her for any society, and, as for her personal endowments, they can be of no common order, if we are to judge by your brother's animated description. Tell him to hasten home; but, indeed, he will, probably, accompany the Godfreys, as, he says, they are preparing for their immediate return to England.'

" You may, therefore, dismiss your fears,

dear brother, of any opposition from my father, and, as to sweet Maggy and myself, assure the fair Louise, that we are ready to receive her with open arms, as a sister.'

"I think, Mr. Merton," said Herbert, when he had concluded the letter, "your question is now fully answered."

"Not only fully, my dear friend, but satisfactorily. There remains now no impediment to the final success of your suit, for I cannot anticipate its rejection by the fair Louise. I consider her destiny a happy one. This interview has, indeed, to all of us, been important; but there was one remark in your narrative that caught my notice. Your friend, Captain Danby, you said, had sailed in command of a convict ship. The vessel in which Edward Mortimer was conveyed from England, in pursuance of his transportation for life, was commanded by one of the same name, who, I frequently believe, will prove to be your friend, as the coincidence is so singular."

"I agree with you," cried Herbert; "and if he is aware of Mr. Mortimer being on board, I feel assured he will mitigate, as far as duty

will admit, the horrors of his situation; but on our reaching England, we shall be better satisfied on this point, as despatches may have been received from Captain Danby. But now, Mr. Merton, return to your friends, mention all that has passed between us, and in two or three days let us all meet at Milan, previous to which, every document in attestation of Mr. Mortimer's innocence will be finally arranged by the authorities, and placed in the hands of the English Consul, to transmit forthwith to his own government. As for myself, I shall now escort this unfortunate widow to Milan, for official examination, the exposure of which she would gladly avoid, but justice forbids."

They now parted, in hopes of a speedy reunion.

Pondering on the late interview, so full of marvel, Charles reached the hotel, where his friends were eagerly waiting his return.

Matilda watched his countenance.

"You are thoughtful, Charles."

"And with justice," was his reply; "for I have that to say which will raise your special wonder. Do not, however, mistake me; all I

have to communicate is cheering. Now hear the history of Herbert."

All eyes were fastened on him; but Louise was pale with emotion.

During his recital, Charles was sometimes interrupted by exclamations of surprise from Matilda, particularly at the mention of Captain Danby going out in command of a convict-ship.

But on none had the narrative more powerful effect than on Louise. She scarcely breathed as she listened to the thrilling account of Herbert's attachment to herself. It seemed incredible to the humble-minded girl, and she almost deemed it some idle mockery; but as Charles proceeded, could she doubt its truth? Her pale cheeks were suddenly covered with burning blushes, and she hid her face on Emily's bosom, who fondly supported her.

"Charles," said Matilda, at its close, "your tale teems with wonders. Surely, it can be no other than Herbert's friend with whom poor Edward sailed, and I cling to the hope that the desolate heart might be cheered by his sympathy. There is a Providence in every event. Louise, my love," and she warmly embraced

her, "it is an honourable love that now awaits your acceptance; but this is too interesting, too delicate a subject except for private discussion, and in my own room I will shortly claim your confidence."

## CHAPTER VI.

ON the second day after Charles's interview with Herbert, the party were on their way to Milan.

Louise was silent and thoughtful; yet there was no sadness at her heart. She was bewildered with her sudden rush of happiness—for it was he who now solicited her love, to whom she had surrendered her virgin heart.

She had never dared to hope that her love would meet return. Her lot was cast among the lowly-born; she could only worship in secret, nor venture to look up to that dazzling height which she could never aspire to reach.



As Matilda listened to her murmured confession, she wept happy tears that her gentle protégée was not fated to nourish an unrequited passion, and that she would be elevated to that station in society which she was so well prepared to fill.

But Matilda's own happiness, though everything conspired to render it certain, was still incomplete. Her dreaded persecutor was dead; the innocence of Edward was placed upon record, yet, he, the loved one, for whose sake alone she had endured these unexampled trials, was yet far away. Now that her mind could dwell exclusively on his return, fears of some unknown evils that might have befallen him, came over her at intervals, though she strove to resist them, as distrustful of that Providence which had hitherto so wonderfully preserved her.

With Charles, her conversation on this subject, though happiness seemed within her grasp, increased in interest as she approached Milan; yet, her cheerfulness never deserted her.

When they reached the well-known hotel, with what changed feelings they now entered it!

The master was ready to welcome them

back, and their arrival occasioned universal bustle and interest. They were the objects of general curiosity, as their singular and eventful history had preceded them and had become, throughout Milan, the theme of public discussion and wonder. Even in the favoured land of romance and adventure, the persevering spirit displayed by the young and beautiful foreigner, her patient, unyielding firmness in emergencies which even defied human calculation how to avert the overwhelming peril, and above all, the hallowed motive that prompted her every action, formed such a combination of attractive novelty as rendered her arrival the absorbing subject of the day. The public papers introduced the mention in their columns, gratifying the general eagerness for information, and even adding, as is frequently the case, the fallacies of rumour, in order to feed the longing appetite for the strange and marvellous.

All this was unheeded by Matilda, who was absorbed in the perusal of letters from her mother and Mrs. Seymour. The pages of the latter were filled with gratitude to Matilda for her blissful tidings just received, and confirmed by her husband, that he was on the wing to

throw himself at her feet, in sincere repentance for his unmanly neglect of his lovely bride, and to solicit her forgiveness.

“Yes, such are his words, Matilda. I am wild with delight. I can scarcely bear this sudden rush of happiness, so overwhelming, so unexpected. And it is all your own blessed work, dearest Matilda. How can I repay you?”

“I am already amply rewarded, sweet Ellen,” murmured Matilda as she turned to her mother’s letter, which proved, as she anticipated, more immediately interesting to herself.

She had retired to her dressing-room, that she might read them undisturbed, and as she opened it, an enclosure dropped on the floor. A faint scream escaped her as she recognized Edward’s writing.

She hastily perused her mother’s letter, and her heart almost throbbed to bursting when she reached the following passage :

“Yes, my dear child, I share your suspense in the absence of farther accounts from Edward

and it was on this anxious subject I was, only this morning, conversing with Mrs. Seymour, when the servant entered, with a card, ‘ Captain Manners, R.N.,’ announcing the presence of the gentleman below, who wished to see me.

“ When he appeared, I was struck with his open, handsome countenance ; but judge of my amazement. He brought letters from Edward ; he had fallen in with Captain Danby at sea, who introduced Edward to his notice, whom, he said, he had formerly met in society, and whose reverse of fortune bewildered him. He cannot consider him guilty of the dreadful crime imputed to him, which has incurred so awful a penalty, and such, he tells me, is Captain Danby’s conviction, who treats Edward like a brother. Would you believe it, my dear child, even in the midst of his sad degradation, our Edward has behaved like a hero of romance. Not only has he encountered adventures and perils, almost too strange for belief ; but the spirit, energy, and activity, he has displayed in the most appalling trials have been so beneficial to the service, that the details have been laid before the Admiralty,

which must have a powerful influence on his future fate.

“ ‘Even was he guilty,’ cried Captain Manners, with energy, ‘he has rendered such services to his country, as fully entitle him to a remission of his sentence; but he is innocent, Mrs. Godfrey, who can believe him otherwise? Never will I rest, till he is restored to his wonted station in society, and even now, his sentence is freely canvassed in influential quarters.’

“ But in Edward’s letter to yourself, which I now enclose, you will, no doubt, find a transcript of all his hopes and feelings as well as the alarming difficulties to which Captain Danby has been exposed on the wide ocean, and which he happily weathered by Edward’s co-operation, whose coolness and intrepidity have gained him so many friends.

“ On your father’s return home, you may judge his joyful surprise, when I told him of Captain Manners’s visit, and the cheering news he communicated. He is gone to call upon him, and Heaven grant, my sweet child, that our present gleam of comfort may go on brightening into perfect day. How anxiously I shall wait your next letter.”

After a burst of grateful prayer, she turned with more coolness to Edward's letter. She was wholly absorbed in its contents. In imagination, she was present with him, as he portrayed the striking vicissitudes of his eventful career, modestly dwelling upon his own services, which had won for himself golden opinions, and would, in due course, reach the home authorities.

She did full justice to his delicacy, in passing lightly over his own personal hardships; but she shuddered as he described the mutiny, and its disastrous consequence, their hopeless abandonment on the wide ocean, in a small, open boat, from which there seemed no escape.

“ But, through all, dearest Matilda, how wonderfully have we been preserved! The dangers we have encountered, side by side, have knit us together like the hearts of brothers. During the most fearful crisis, we have cheered each other, and every succeeding peril has tended to cement our friendship. Have I not cause for thankfulness? When I am inclined to murmur at my wretched destiny, in being thus branded with undeserved



infamy, I think of the sunny gleams which have brightened my heavy hours, when all seemed hopeless around me, I think of yourself, whose mental agony may be fiercer than my own, and whose enduring affection is the anchor on which I lean for my best reward."

The letter continued the narration of his struggles and adventures to the period of Captain Manners's departure for England. Every line was a balm to her heart.

"He is well," she murmured to herself, "his mind rises superior to the frowns of fortune, he still clings to the certainty of our re-union, and have not I, also, cause for thankfulness?"

She sank upon her knees, she spread, like Hezekiah, the open letter before her.

"I thank thee, gracious God, this is thy blessed work; what am I, that thou shouldest pursue me with these blessings?"

Tears coursed down her cheeks, and her heart expanded, with joyful gratitude.

Charles now entered, unobserved, and she hastily turned, as he approached.

"I could not defer seeking you, sweet coz.; surely these are tears of joy?"

"They are, dear Charles. Share my joy, and read these letters."

"He is, indeed, a hero of romance," exclaimed Charles, after their perusal. "He must have that within him that almost passes belief, otherwise, he must have sunk beneath these unprecedented trials of mind and body."

"Aye, Charles, and that comes from Heaven," cried Matilda, with animation. "We shall meet at last."

"Yes," replied Charles, "I shall witness it ere many months be past. But during your absence, sweet coz., our good friend Herbert has called. We that understand the passion so well, cannot wonder at his impatience. He is already breathing his tale of love in Louise's ear."

"He is a noble creature, Charles; and their course of love does indeed run smooth."

"Yet more, sweet coz., the news Herbert brings is truly encouraging. The official documents, to prove Edward's innocence, have been already handed over to the English consul, and, by him, forwarded to his government. Now, indeed, may we heartily congratulate each other. He has seen the English consul, who has announced his intention to honor you

with a visit ; but Herbert also intimates, you will, probably, be favored with calls by many of the influential élite of the city, among whom the adventures of the ‘young and beautiful foreigner’ have excited, he says, an extraordinary sensation. As it is more than probable that curiosity may be their leading motive, he hesitates not to say, you may fairly dispense with the fatigue of receiving them.”

“And advice too, Charles, in which I cordially coincide. What, to be gazed at, like a lioness ! Such an ordeal would be, to me, truly disgusting. But now to see our dear friend Herbert.”

And it was a cordial meeting. The reserve on both sides, arising from their relative positions, had wholly passed away, and all was now unreserved freedom of intercourse. Nor was it long before Herbert entered into the subject nearest to his heart, his attachment to her fair protégée.

“You know my history, Miss Godfrey. Like your own, it has been saddened by a similar cause. In this very room we met, under very different circumstances, and little did I then dream that from that interview would arise such unexpected happiness to my-

self. In this room, too, within this half hour, this happiness has received its consummation—the lovely girl has listened favourably to my suit.”

“Need I say, Mr. Herbert, that for my own part, I love Louise as a sister, and can I do otherwise than rejoice in the sunny prospects before her? But now that you are emancipated from your late profession, I trust we shall part no more till we reach London.”

“And there is now nothing, dear Miss Godfrey, to impede our almost immediate departure, as the papers are now in the hands of the English Consul.”

Madame now entered with Charles, when their future movements were cheerfully discussed, and the day after the morrow fixed for their northward movement.

“And,” said Madame. “it might be considered unfriendly by my tenants at the villa, were we to neglect paying them a hasty visit on our route. Shall I write to Lady Leslie, Matilda?”

“Do so,” replied Matilda. Even a glimpse of our dear friends will be gratifying.”

“Lady Leslie!” remarked Herbert. “The wife of Sir William?”

“The same,” said Madame; “do you know them?”

“I know Sir William intimately. He was a frequent guest at my father’s, before his marriage, and was a great favourite. Lady Leslie I have not seen; but I understand she was a foreigner of surpassing beauty.”

The door suddenly opened, and the lovely Greek, leading the little boy, came forward.

Herbert was struck with her improved appearance; the look of sadness, though not wholly gone, was so chastened that she seemed almost happy. She greeted him with evident delight, and he led her to a seat next his own.

“My dear lady,” he said, “I was just about to enquire for you, having some communications to make to you, of importance to your interests. The property belonging to yourself and your young protégée now before us, was duly forwarded, by myself, to Milan, and is now safely lodged with the bankers here. Yesterday, I examined the whole, in their presence, in order to make a schedule, and I

strongly advise that the jewels, the value of which is immense, be forthwith realized."

"I will be guided by your advice, Mr. Herbert. Business of this sort is altogether strange to me."

"We are all your friends, dear lady, and sincere ones. I would recommend your accompanying Charles and myself to-morrow to the banker's, when the whole matter can be fully entered into, and finally arranged. It is necessary that you should be personally known to them, and they will require your authority and signature, as various documents may be necessary previous to the investment of the proceeds in the English funds. I recommend this mode of investment, as I am inclined to think that England may be, for some time at least, your place of residence."

"Mr. Herbert," she replied with emotion, "you have read my heart. Never can I part from my kind friends here. Their country must be my country; and as for the other arrangements, if Mr. Charles and yourself will kindly protect the interests of a solitary woman, I cannot be too grateful."

The visit to the banker's was accordingly decided upon, nor did this communication of



Herbert tend to lessen the general satisfaction.

Matilda was now retiring, for the purpose of preparing her letters for England, when Werner entered the room, announcing the approach of the English Consul.

“You may probably expect to find him, Miss Godfrey, from his official situation,” said Herbert, “dignified and stately in his demeanour; but he is quite the reverse. He is familiar and cheerful, and at times almost playful in his manners, from the natural warmth of his heart. But when the duties of his station demand energy and prompt decision, he is never wanting. It is at such times that he shines forth, the man and the statesman.”

He now entered.

“Ah, Herbert, are you here! Make me known to Miss Godfrey.”

After introduction, he took her hand and gazed earnestly at her.

“Be not offended,” he said; “I have heard marvellous tales about you, Miss Godfrey; but as rumour’s thousand tongues are too apt to mislead, I scarcely expected they would have adhered to truth in the present instance. From one so young, so lovely, and so feminine, who could have expected such deeds of heroism?”

His voice trembled as he added, "happy the parents of such a child! Surely the fates have now done persecuting you, my poor girl."

"I indulge such a hope," replied Matilda; "and not, I venture to think, without reason. Your own last act, in forwarding to your government the official proofs of my Edward's innocence, will be the crowning triumph."

"And my government will do him justice—efficient, though tardy justice. And the English public, too! they will make him amends—they will receive him back with open arms. But your Edward deserves more, and he must have it."

"The vindication of his innocence, sir, and our happy meeting are enough, and he requires no more."

"Aye, there it is—there it is; enough for yourselves, no doubt; but will it satisfy the public? I have read, patiently read, the documents which have passed through my hands, and my old heart warmed at every line. Why, my poor girl, you rival all the heroines of antiquity. Your adventures will be hawked about through Italy, with those of the redoubted Rinaldo Rinaldini, and, I doubt not, meet a readier sale."

"I should be better pleased," replied Matilda smiling, "if they would allow me to pass away unnoticed and unsung."

"Can't be—can't be—Miss Godfrey. Even in Milan I have been beset with enquiries from all our fashionables, old and young, whether you might not be persuaded to hold a levee, in order that they might gratify their curiosity. I have, however, saved you the fatigue of their visits, on the plea of your short stay, otherwise your hotel would have been besieged. I doubt not that in every house the young and lovely foreigner is the prevailing topic and lioness of the day."

Here he was interrupted by the entrance of Emily and Louise, and never did they look so interesting.

"Wonder upon wonder," exclaimed the visitor, "and who are these? I thought that you, Miss Godfrey, had monopolised all the beauty of the party; but here is a proof to the contrary. You are in a dangerous neighbourhood, Herbert? Pray, which is your Armida?"

Herbert, good humouredly, gratified him; and now Madame and Charles, successively claimed his notice with particular compliments addressed to each.

“ You see, Miss Godfrey, I am familiar with all, from the interest those documents excited in me. Now, tell me, if there be any matter in which I can be made useful. If so, command my best services.”

She thanked him warmly ; but assured him, she was not aware of the necessity of any farther claim on his generous interference.

He now rose, and with all a father’s blessing bestowed upon her, and kindly expressed wishes to all, he left the apartment.

## CHAPTER VII.

AND now Milan was left at last.

“On, on, on,” was Matilda’s morning exclamation, as home was now uppermost in her thoughts; though friendship had many claims, which induced them to halt, at intervals, on their route.

With what different sensations did the travellers pass through the several towns, on their return, most of which were associated with recollections of painful events, to which it then seemed hopeless to expect a happy termination.

Dennis, who travelled as before, with his

favorite Mary, was more than usually eloquent upon the strange adventures that had befallen them, and in which he had sustained so important a part.

At times, his self-flattery was so prominent, and expressed in so pompous a strain, in his own peculiar phraseology, that Mary's mirth was, at times, offensive to his assumed dignity.

We would enlighten our readers with a true and genuine account of the torrent of high sounding phrases, that burst from his lips, and which, being engrafted on his original simplicity, rendered the union too ludicrous for Mary to withstand; but, it is time to hurry this our history a conclusion.

The spirits of all the party improved in buoyancy, as they rapidly proceeded; even beauty looked more beautiful. There were no fears, no regrets, in the sparkling cup which Love presented to their lips.

They were about to reap the bright harvest of their hopes and wishes, which the sun of success had now ripened, and it was rich and promising.

Even the lone widow dwelt, with less intensity of thought, on the past, as she thankfully felt, that her lot had fallen upon a fair ground,



and every day revealed new charms in her disposition, that rivetted yet more the attachment of her friends.

They continued their journey by the northern route, along the banks of the lake, as Madame was anxious to learn if her old, attached servant Baptiste was safely returned to Lausanne, which Herbert considered more than probable.

They now left Vevay behind them, and all the saddening memories, which the sight of it revived, but which, however, tended to set off in bold relief their present happiness.

“We must stop a few minutes,” cried Matilda, “at the road-side cottage, to witness the wedded comforts of poor Blanche, for, I doubt not, she and Basil have been for some time, united.”

And they soon reached the neat, sequestered dwelling, where the sudden arrival of so gay a cavalcade caused some confusion.

As Matilda approached the rose-covered porch, she was recognized; a lovely girl sprang from the house, and threw herself, with a cry of delight, into her arms, and then, as if ashamed of her too great familiarity, retreated, blushing, on one side.

"Blanche, my love," said Matilda, kissing her, "we could not pass without stopping to witness your happiness."

"Yes, dear lady, and happiness, all of your own and good Madame's creating. Basil and I have often talked about you, and wondered if we should ever see you again. My father lives with us, and we are all so comfortable."

"And how is Marguerite? and how is Hal-ler?" asked Madame.

"They are to be married next week; and they are all gone to Lausanne to make their little purchases, and I, fortunately remained at home. They will be so sorry not to have seen you."

They remained with the delighted Blanche longer than they intended, listening to the out-pourings of her guileless heart, and sincerely gratified with all they saw and heard.

They were now quitting the cottage,

"Here's our minister," suddenly exclaimed Blanche, "just entering the garden gate."

And their valued friend, the good pastor of Lausanne, immediately appeared.

"I guessed as much, Miss Godfrey," he said, smiling, as he cordially welcomed the

whole party; "it warms my old heart to see you again."

Another half-hour fled swiftly in eager conversation.

"The Leslies are well; I parted from them only this morning, and they had just received Madame's letter, announcing the joyful prospect of an early meeting. But my sweet child, and you too, dear Madame, I do not see a cloud upon your brows. Happiness is written there in legible characters. Speak, and bless me by confirming this."

"And I do confirm it," replied Matilda, not unmoved at his warmth; but the story is long, and time will not admit, probably, on either side, of the lengthened detail now. Lady Leslie shall know all, and from her you shall hear it. In the meantime, be satisfied, that, ere long, all will be well."

"Happy, happy news!" cried the pastor; "the blessing of God has been with you, my child, otherwise, human nature must have sunk under such a load of suffering."

His look now fell on Herbert, who was watching the passing scene, deeply interested.

"Let me introduce Mr. Herbert to you," said Matilda, who noticed the glance; "he is

deserving of your especial esteem, for his services to me and mine."

"It was only yesterday," observed the pastor, "that Sir William was speaking highly of a young friend of his, Douglas Herbert, the son of Lord Herbert, who was engaged to a wealthy Scotch heiress. Is this the same?"

"The same," replied Herbert; "but the description is only partly correct. My name is Douglas Herbert; but it is my good brother Montague, who has won the affections of the lady in question. Here, sir, at my side, is my own fortunate choice; and, permit me, to present to you my future bride."

And he led the blushing girl to the pastor.

"When last we met, Miss Godfrey," said the delighted pastor, as he held Louise's hand, "other subjects than those of love and marriage absorbed your every thought. All was then intense anxiety; but when such sweet domestic names come over the ear, they speak of peace, tranquillity, and comfort, and may such ever rest with you all. Before, however, we part," he continued, turning to Madame, "I have pleasure in advising you, that your respected servant Baptiste, is returned to Lausanne, and, at present, under my roof. You pass through Lausanne?"

“Yes, and I mean to see him.”

“You will find him much altered, from the severe treatment, which has undermined his health; and the unexpected death of his sister has, also, sadly depressed him; but the sight of you will relieve him, as he talks much about you. But we must now part, my dear friends, each to our several duties. I am myself on one of my usual tours about the lake, to visit my scattered parishioners.”

They soon left the cottage for behind; and one hour was devoted at Lausanne to the charitable visit to Baptiste, and the purchase of the promised wedding memorial for Marguerite, which was duly despatched to her. And now they reached the villa, where preparations had been made to receive all the party, in spite of remonstrances to the contrary. Here was domestic repose, here that exemption from ever gnawing fears to which they had been so long strangers, affection greeted them on every side; the very atmosphere seemed to breathe peace and tranquillity, and to whisper to Matilda's bosom a fore-taste of that happy home which she was herself so soon to enjoy. But even this fair abode was only a temporary resting-place. Two days passed in unreserved

intercourse, in that complete abandonment to the enjoyment of present comfort which those only can fully estimate, whose mind and body have been strained even to the limits of human endurance. That ever restless excitement, that fearful looking for undefined evils ever ready to burst upon them, that panting for ease which the morrow seemed never to bring; where were they now? They lived only in the memory, and even Matilda shuddered as she told the tale, and almost wondered that she should be still living to be the chronicler of of the dreadful past.

The third morning came, and when the object of Matilda's anxiety to reach London was considered, the parting regrets were silent, and their entertainers pressed not for a longer stay.

Again they commenced their route, flew rapidly over the fair fields of France, even Paris could not detain them; the coast was reached, they trod on English ground, and on the wings of steam at length, reached London, and our noble-minded heroine was clasped in the arms of her parents.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Two months had rapidly flown since Matilda's arrival at home, and, during that period, what cheering progress had been made towards the final crowning of her heart's one all-absorbing wish !

The closing battle was to be fought in London, there the last struggle was to be made, and everything conspired to promote a successful issue. Her story was in general circulation, she was surrounded by influential friends, but even their interference was hardly required among the government authorities, who were struck with the official documents forwarded

to them from Italy, that not a doubt arose of Edward Mortimer's innocence. Had there been any hesitation on their part, public opinion must have urged them forward, but there was none, and soon the press, whose columns teemed with a subject so well calculated to awaken general interest, announced the widespread intelligence that despatches had been sent out for his immediate recal.

In the meantime, all was joyful anticipation. Can it be wondered at, that the Godfrey family, including the two lovely foreigners, were objects of general curiosity and attraction, even in the wide world of London? Those were considered peculiarly fortunate, who had the privilege of the *entrée* into their circle, and who had thus an opportunity of gratifying their curiosity, which was accessible only to few, though envied by all.

Rumour was never weary of reporting the surpassing witchery of the four beauteous inmates, who, far from courting the general gaze, seemed to shrink from observation, and confine their happiness to their own exclusive domestic paradise.

And it was a source of no trifling gratifica-

tion to Matilda to witness Mrs. Seymour's recovered beauty and spirits.

It was sometime before the happy Ellen sobered down into a calm, rational enjoyment of her altered fortunes.

"Even yet," her rosy billets would say, "you must help me to check this man's overweening vanity. He declares that he daily loves me more and more. Yes, he has just now had the impertinence to tell me this to my face. What must I do with him? He declares, too, he would rather spend his evenings alone with me than mix with society. Do tell Charles to invite him to dinner, that I may, at least, pass one evening of quiet."

The meeting of Herbert with his father was mutually gratifying, though Herbert noticed with sorrow, his evident symptoms of broken health, but his father seemed to revive at the sight of him.

"I am not the man I was, my dear boy," he said at last, "when you parted from me, and I must now look to my home for comfort

and happiness. Bring my new daughter to me as soon as you like, that o may learn to love her.

On leaving their father's presence, the two brothers, delighted with his affectionate reception repaired together to the Godfrey's, that Montague might be introduced to the family, and more particularly to the fair Louise. His open, frank bearing was a ready passport to all their hearts; though poor Louise almost trembled at the ordeal that awaited her, when, with a kiss, he announced his father's eager desire to see her. His own loved Maggy, he said, was returned to Scotland with her mother, but at their next meeting, she would surrender herself wholly to him.

Ever since Matilda's arrival, Captain Manner's had been almost a daily visitor, and the interest he had so feelingly taken in Edward's fate, received an increased stimulus, when he came within the sphere of her attractions. They had much to say, and were never weary of listening to each other, and again and again the narrative of his meeting with Edward was repeated to her, yet the subject was never exhausted, never drooped

terest. She warmly thanked him for his disinterested zeal in the cause of her Edward, and "he himself," she exultingly said, "will shortly thank you." Nor was Manners himself less excited, when he heard from her own lips the history which as yet he had but imperfectly known, of all she had dared, and suffered for the sake of her injured lover. As he gazed on the beautiful girl, while she was speaking, he was lost in wonder at the strength of that affection, which wavered not even in the darkest hour, realizing the inspired promise "Though the world forsake thee, yet will I never forsake thee," and which ventured all even unto death, in the hallowed cause, and now stood forth before an admiring world, the triumphant vindicator of innocence. His intimacy also, which every day cemented, with Charles and the Herberts, was a bright era in his existence, as their minds were congenial with his own. It seemed his sole occupation, so intense was his anxiety to promote the final consummation of Matilda's happiness by active co-operation with those around her. His enquiries at the Admiralty were incessant as farther tidings might now be expected respect-

ing the onward progress of Danby since his own parting with him in pursuit of the mutineers. But was there no other inducement that attracted him thus daily to the Godfreys'? Were there no sweet overpowering memories that after every visit, clung close and closer round him, that haunted his dreams, and created a restless impatience for the return of that hour when he could renew his visit? Yes, the lovely Greek had unconsciously taken captive the heart of Manners. Though an admirer of female beauty, he had hitherto passed, unscathed by its attractions, but he now yielded unresistingly to its powerful fascination, and sensations novel and delightful, such as the first whispers of love can alone create, stole o'er his generous heart, and coloured everything round him with its bright enchantment. When alone with Matilda, he introduced the mention of her so often, that with a woman's tact, she suspected the state of his feelings, questioned him, and he denied it not.

"Hear her history," she said, "Captain Manners, the knowledge of it may turn the current of your thoughts into another channel, but still it would be unjust to you to withhold its communication."



It was told, and she read its effect in every animated feature.

“All that you have said, dear Miss Godfrey,” replied Manners, “only flings a halo of deeper interest round her. Her life has yet been short, but eventful, and her conduct in every emergency tends to prove her genuine purity of heart, and the native dignity of her soul. Her late husband must have been a noble fellow. True, he was a bandit, but he was nobly born, and his original offence was a political one, but its source was an honourable feeling for his oppressed country. She is yet young Miss Godfrey, and no protector save yourself.”

“She is yet only twenty. She is worthy, Captain Manners, of your love and esteem, but whether even your eloquence can win her to change her purpose, to devote her life to the exclusive welfare of the two young claimants upon her affection, the attempt best can prove, yet I would not discourage you.”

Nor was he discouraged. He became a great favourite with her youthful protégée who even at his early age, evinced a liking to the sea, which propensity the grieved widow wished to check, but the boy attached himself at every

opportunity to Manners, when he learned his profession, and Manners was delighted with the spirited youth. This fondness on the part of the boy, threw Manners into closer intimacy with the widow, who was unconsciously led into a gradual feeling in his favour. One morning, Manners, after dreaming as was his wont, about his fair enslaver, rose early, impatient for the hour when he might again be admitted into her society. Among the letters on his breakfast table, was one bearing the official impress of the Admiralty. It required his presence, and he duly obeyed the summons, in sanguine hopes that the expected despatch was arrived. It was so, but not from Danby.

“There are other interests, Captain Manners, besides those of the public,” said the secretary, “concerned in the despatches the board has received from Lieutenant Watson. You left Captain Danby in pursuit of the mutineers; he overtook them, a desperate battle has been fought; he recovered his vessel, but was killed in the struggle. The private letters will not be deliverrd till to-morrow; but as, in the meantime, unpleasant rumours may be circulated, involving the peace of those who

have friends on board, you have been sent for, Captain Manners, in order that you may act accordingly."

Manners' generous heart bled to hear Danby's fate, though his fall was glorious. He almost trembled as he ventured the enquiry,

"I have friends, deeply interested, as you know, in the welfare of that noble fellow, Edward Mortimer—surely, he lives?"

"He lives, Captain Manners, and has again earned for himself the thanks of his country. It was mainly owing to Mr. Mortimer's energy and unshaken intrepidity that the vessel was re-captured. Lieutenant Watson, in his despatches, does him ample justice. Lose no time in acquainting your friends with the news, for to them it is indeed important."

It was with lingering step and saddened heart that Manners proceeded towards the Godfreys'. Even the lovely widow faded, for the moment, from his thoughts, which were wholly absorbed in sincere regret for Danby's early fate; but he rallied his spirits ere he reached the house, lest the absence of his wonted cheerfulness might cause unnecessary alarm. But Matilda read his look; it was not open and unclouded as usual.

“You bring some serious intelligence, Captain Manners,” she said, with throbbing heart.

“You conjecture rightly, dear Miss Godfrey, and joy and sorrow are so blended with it, that I scarce know how to begin. Let it suffice to say, despatches have reached the Admiralty; Captain Danby was successful in overtaking the mutineers, a fearful struggle ensued, his ship was re-captured, but he, poor fellow, fell in the hard-fought struggle.”

Matilda stood like a statue. There was yet more to hear.

“The victory was mainly owing to that gallant fellow, Edward Mortimer, who has again earned the gratitude of his country. The Admiralty board are enthusiastic in his praise; and to crown all, he is well and hearty.”

Matilda clasped her hands in wild excitement.

“May God be merciful to the dead, and may their names be found among those which are written in Heaven; and blessed be His goodness on account of the living!”

Her joy was chastened by the recollection of Danby's untimely death, whose generous friendship had cheered the solitary convict with

all a brother's love ; but her Edward had come forth from the bloody conflict unharmed, and his gallant bearing would be circulated through the length and breadth of the land.

“ Yes, his grateful country would rend his chains ; and her heart swelled, exulting at the thought on the proud eminence of which he stood by his own unassisted exertions.

At this moment, Herbert entered the room, accompanied by Louise, on her return from her daily visit to Lord Herbert, whose infirmities had so increased upon him that he mixed little with the world, and looked to his own domestic circle for enjoyment. His eldest son was now attached to a public embassy abroad ; but he looked not in vain to the others.

When the introduction, so much dreaded by Louise, was over, and she could give way without restraint, to her natural disposition, Herbert saw with delight that his father soon became sincerely attached to her. In return for the evident pleasure he received from her attentions, she would, for his own sake, have cheerfully contributed all she could to his comforts ; but she had now a superior motive which so sweetly animated her every wish to please, that his fervent blessing rested upon

her at the close of every visit, and he now mainly occupied himself in early arrangements for the double union which would extend the sphere of his own domestic happiness. This was also increased by intercourse with the Godfreys, and he no longer felt solitary. Their society gave a new charm to existence. Even before he knew Matilda, he was prepared to love her, for Herbert had already acquainted him with her early sorrows, and the recital had roused such intense sympathy and astonishment that he almost deemed her an object of reverence, too sacred for earthly love.

When Herbert was acquainted with the intelligence which had reached the Admiralty, he stood as if paralyzed. Every other feeling was, for the moment, absorbed in the unexpected death of Danby, his friend and school-fellow, and he strove in vain to check the tear that spoke how deeply he mourned his loss.

All the inmates were assembled, and a gloom was creeping over all; but Manners, with happy tact, succeeded in dispersing it.

“Dear Miss Godfrey, we must not bury with the dead our gratitude for the safety of the living. Danby’s end was glorious. He fell, as he ever wished to fall, in the service of



his country, and in the moment of victory; but let us not forget the brighter side of the picture. Edward Mortimer has survived the conflict, and lives to receive, as he will receive, the thanks of his country for his eminent services. Yes, his country will be eager to record her sense of his disinterested heroism in her cause, and to blot out, for ever, that unjust sentence which has branded one of the noblest hearts with undeserved infamy."

Matilda's brightened look spoke how gratefully she thanked him.

"Nobly spoken, Captain Manners," said Charles. "On what a commanding eminence he stands! But methinks, sweet coz., when he again treads on English soil, not even an applauding country will tend to gladden his noble heart with purer joy than the proof that you have so amply redeemed the pledge you gave him in the parting hour."

How vividly now rose to her recollection that parting hour, when the dreadful fiat yet rang in her ear! Well might the pledge be then deemed wild and visionary; but had she not redeemed it? How vividly, too, rose to her father's recollection that momentous interview when he strove to detach her for ever

from one whom, with the rest of the world, he considered unworthy of her.

Yes, he then looked upon her as the victim of some fatal delusion from which it was a father's duty to rescue her.

## CHAPTER IX.

ON the appearance of the *Gazette*, making public the despatches from Watson, the general attention was roused to them. They contained so many interesting and affecting incidents, connected with the defeat and capture of the mutineers, and pourtrayed in such manly, spirit-stirring language the persevering energy of Captain Danby in the pursuit, and the loyal devotion of the intrepid few that would not desert him in the hour of peril, particularly of Edward Mortimer, whose individual example of heroism and zealous co-operation with Captain Danby, so mainly contributed to the final

success, that the public mind was unusually excited. The fall of Danby, though in the arms of victory, awakened universal sympathy. He fell in the bloom of youth, when his gallant deeds were rich with promise of future eminence in his profession, and his sorrowing country mourned the sudden close of his brilliant career.

But from the dead, attention was turned to the living, and if there could yet exist any doubt in the public mind who this Edward Mortimer might be, it was solved by Watson's manly and energetic language, ere he closed his despatches :

“ Your lordships are already aware that Mr. Mortimer has been sentenced by his country to transportation for life, being convicted of crimes at which humanity revolts. My lords, human judgment is not infallible, and Captain Danby has ever recorded his settled conviction that he is incapable of the guilty deeds imputed to him. Even in the degraded situation to which he was reduced, his bearing was that of the gallant gentleman, and in every crisis, (and the ship was exposed to many) he was foremost in danger, always upholding disci-

pline, and bore his own sufferings with such dignified submission, that Captain Danby loved him as a brother. In all his disastrous career Mr. Mortimer was ever at his side, cheering and assisting him with a spirit worthy of a better fate. My lords, I record my own humble testimony with that of Captain Danby, that his country owes him much. It was almost wholly by Mr. Mortimer's skilful management, and with means totally inadequate for such an enterprise, that the beautiful vessel was made prize of, which now conveys this despatch to England, a well known slaver on the African coast, which from its superior swiftness has hitherto eluded capture, though frequently chased. By this fortunate capture Captain Danby was enabled to pursue and recover his own ship, though Providence willed not that he should survive the conflict. My lords, Mr. Mortimer deserved the honorable distinction of bearing these despatches to England, in reward for his zeal and loyalty, but his country has hurled him like a plague spot from its shores, and my own anxious wishes to befriend him must give way to the stern dictates of duty."

This interesting document was circulated far and wide, through the medium of the daily journals, which continued to feed the public thirst for more particular details respecting this mutiny, which seemed to throw into shade the well-known adventures of Captain Bligh. Private letters from various of the crew were therein published, rich in thrilling narrative that spoke the merits of their beloved commander. and all acknowledging the gallant spirit and prompt decision of Mortimer during their unparalleled sufferings. All ranks, from the highest to the lowest, felt a personal interest in the future fortunes of this injured, this noble-minded individual, who though conscious of his own innocence, yet by patiently submitting to the severe sentence passed upon him, added dignity to misfortune, and enforced universal respect, calmly waiting for that proud moment, when the injustice of his sentence would be at length acknowledged. But it was in the domestic circle of the Godfrey's that this public testimonial of the eminent services of Mortimer, and of the general eagerness for a reversal of his unjust sentence, was welcomed with unalloyed delight. It was the earnest to Matilda of the speedy consummation of her



warmest wishes. Yes, every incident now tended rapidly to bring on that decisive moment when Edward, in all the triumph of established innocence, would again tread on English ground, and the memory of past suffering be lost in the overwhelming tide of present happiness.

It was the evening of the day the Gazette was published, when the family circle assembled at dinner, joined only by the Herberts and Manners, in order that the conversation might flow free and unrestrained upon the all engrossing subject. Never had Godfrey felt so happy as now, when he looked round his own table, and his eye rested only on smiling faces. He owned to himself he had never more cause for thankfulness. His only, his beloved child was restored to him, no longer as he once deemed, exhausting her youth in the chase of a visionary phantom, but in the full plenitude of health and happiness. As she passed him, supporting her mother on their retirement from the dining-room, he thought she never looked more beautiful. Every feature was radiant with delight, and the playful tap she gave him in passing, accompanied with her musical laugh, spoke the sunshine in her

bosom. Godfrey was no niggard of his present happiness, and as he cheerfully circulated the wine, Charles was delighted with the evident pleasure he evinced in the society of his young friends. And the generous hearts round him responded to his warmth.

“My dear nephew,” he said turning to his favourite Charles, “was I disposed to rob any one, it would be your father.”

“Of what, dear uncle?”

“Of yourself, Charles.”

“Indeed, uncle, my father must consider the robbery as having already taken place, by my apparent forgetfulness of him. You do right, uncle, in reminding me of my duty.”

“Stay where you are, boy. Your father knows, we cannot possibly spare you. Indeed, your cousin would be lost without you, for every hour may bring important events.”

Charles thought of Emily, and was satisfied.

“Werner seems much attached to you, nephew.”

“Not to myself exclusively, uncle. He adores my fair cousin, as a being of another world. His engagement with me expired on

our return to Geneva, but we were mutually unwilling to part."

"He must be blind, indeed," observed Godfrey, "that does not notice his attachment to you all, but he is besides, so active and obliging and understands domestic arrangements so well, that I would gladly claim possession of him."

"Indeed, uncle, I am satisfied your offer would be eagerly accepted, as the faithful fellow almost trembles at the mention of parting, but to-morrow shall decide it. I think too, a pair of bright eyes has attached him more strongly to your family."

"Aye, nephew, the influence of bright eyes is likely to interfere with my domestic comforts. I suppose you will be following the fashion yourself, and I must make up my mind as well as I can, to the prospect of losing your society."

This was said with such evident feeling, that Charles replied, much affected,

"Indeed, dear uncle you distress yourself prematurely, for should such an event occur, instead of losing, you would gain an addition to your comforts."

"Well spoken, my dear boy. By adding to

your own happiness, you will then increase mine. Are you an advocate for early marriages, Capt. Manners. These boys seem to be getting on at railway speed."

Manners almost blushed at this unexpected appeal, but his secret was safe, as Matilda had hitherto confined her discovery to her own bosom. His confusion was unnoticed, as he hastily replied,

"I cannot deny it, Mr. Godfrey, and I suspect, that those who hear me, are of the same opinion."

The door suddenly opened, and Dennis entering the room, approached Manners, and leaning over his chair, addressed him in a low tone. Manners started from his chair.

"A young sailor, Dennis? Did he mention his name?"

It was enough; Manners, beckoning to Charles, apologized to Godfrey for leaving him so abruptly.

Half-an-hour passed, their return was eagerly looked for, but they were still absent.

"Methinks," said Herbert, "some interesting news has arrived."

"I doubt it not," replied Godfrey, "a sailor has summoned Manners, probably the

bearer of the ship's letters. Let us enquire for ourselves."

Charles appeared as they were quitting the room.

"All well, Charles?" eagerly asked Godfrey.

"Yes, dear uncle, and my sweet coz. is engaged in reading her letters from our loved Edward. But Elton, the young sailor, what a fine handsome fellow! When he saw Manners, he flung himself into his arms, sobbing aloud, and asking affectionately after his dear mother and sister."

"Where is he now, Charles?"

"Why, uncle, from impatience to see his friends, and particularly to deliver Miss Godfrey her letters, he has neither eat nor drank since he left the vessel off Portsmouth. He is busy discussing some creature comforts, and talking with Manners, but will soon be at liberty."

And he shortly entered with Manners.

In the course of this, our history, we have already so frequently made mention of Elton, that he must be familiar with our readers, so that we will not pause long to describe him. Even Manners was struck with his improved

appearance since their last parting, and Elton himself was not slow in discovering that he was now among sincere friends. There was a momentary sadness in Manners' look as he entered.

He had been listening to a vivid account of the stirring incidents connected with Danby's death, and the tears of the youthful narrator fell during the recital. But when he spoke of Mortimer, his eyes flashed with indignant feeling.

"A convict and a murderer! Shame on the foul libel! Why is he not here? Oh! Captain Manners, I loved him next to yourself. God forgive those who sentenced him, but I cannot! He is all honour—all purity of soul! And must he die like a dog, in a foreign land—no friend near him! His noble heart must break at last!"

"My dear boy," Manners warmly replied to this burst of honest feeling, "have you not heard the glad news? His innocence is proved, and orders are already sent out for his recall."

"This is as it should be!" exclaimed the delighted youth. "And the dear lady—she knows it all?"



“ She does, Elton. It is by Miss Godfrey’s unshaken perseverance that this happy change has been effected. But you will see her, for she will have a thousand questions to ask you.”

Elton was an object of interest to all. He knew, he loved Mortimer, and every word respecting him was eagerly listened to; nor was Elton ever weary of ringing the praises of one so dear to him.

“ Captain Manners,” he said, as they were leaving the dining-room, “ I must now hasten to see my mother and sister.”

“ Stay with me to-night, my boy. You could not possibly reach your mother’s cottage, beyond Richmond, in less than two hours, and it is already late. They will have retired to rest. Besides, they will not expect you till to-morrow. Be content, then, to stay. And you could not leave without seeing Miss Godfrey, whom you say you already love for Mr. Mortimer’s sake.”

When Elton was introduced into the drawing-room, his young heart was fascinated with the lovely beings that came forward to greet him as a friend. He turned from one to the

other, as if bewildered ; but Manners relieved him by leading him to Matilda.

“Mr. Elton,” she said, “I cannot receive you as a common acquaintance.”

But Elton answered not ; he looked earnestly at her. He had now before him that beloved object whose name he had so often heard from Mortimer, during many a weary night-watch on “the melancholy main,” whose faith, whose affection still clung to him, true as the needle to the Pole, when deserted by all, who, in defiance of public opinion, proclaimed her conviction of his innocence, and strong in her dependance on God to aid her efforts, devoted herself, with all a martyr’s zeal, to prove it, and finally triumphed ; she now stood before him, more enchantingly lovely than he had been taught to believe her.

“Elton, my dear boy,” said Manners, who guessed his feelings, “are you an adept in reading ladies’ countenances ?”

Elton was confused.

“Indeed, Miss Godfrey, I could not help it — pray forgive me. I was thinking of poor Mortimer.”

That expression was an immediate passport to her heart.

"I have little to forgive, Mr. Elton," she said, as he still held her hand, which she withdrew not.

Her thoughts, like Elton's were, for the moment, far away. Every rising memory increased the interest his presence excited in her. He had been the companion of Edward's solitary hours, had listened to his sorrows; the hand which held her own had not long since felt the clasp of Edward's, and his presence seemed the harbinger of his early coming—the blissful earnest of their speedy meeting.

At this moment, a beautiful boy stole to Elton's side, and taking hold of his hand, looked wistfully in his face.

"You are a sailor, they all say. Will you tell me all about the sea?"

"I will," said Elton, delighted with the boy's earnestness.

"And when you go again to sea, ask mama if she will let me go with you. I am a great boy, now."

And at Matilda's instigation, Elton accompanied the eager pleader to the observant widow; and it may not be here irrelevant to state that, in after years, this young aspirant after nautical fame, commenced his career in

the profession, under the command of Manners, nor was his joy lessened by Elton being appointed to the same vessel.

Not the least happy of the party were Godfrey and his wife who, with Emily's uncle, Mr. Newton, sat apart, engaged in animated conversation upon the final dispersion of that fearful tempest which threatened, at one time, to blight for ever their domestic tranquillity.

Newton had only lately returned from Germany, where he had been summoned respecting some perplexing matters relative to his deceased brother, who had improvidently entered into heavy responsibilities, which swept away all his property. The unhappy man survived not the disastrous blow.

Ten years of successful industry at length enabled his debtor to render his family tardy justice, and to make ample amends, as far as money could do so, for that wretchedness which he had caused.

Newton, as his brother's executor, received this unexpected acquisition of wealth. His orphan niece was no longer in a dependent situation, nor indebted to charitable friends for this welcome addition to her comforts.

Emily was startled with the pleasing intelli-

gence, yet considered it only with reference to that attachment to which she had surrendered her virgin heart, for at times a chilling thought would come over her, that his father might object to the portionless orphan, as the bride of his only son. This apprehension was now dissipated, yet Charles himself loved her not the more for this access of worldly advantages.

Her fond father, when living, had resided in the neighbourhood of Hampstead, but his beautiful villa was swallowed up in the storm that wrecked him. It was now at liberty, her uncle purchased it, as the future home of his delighted niece and himself, and the fears of being removed to a distance from her friends were now set at rest. It was with all the pride of a parent that Newton gazed on Emily at their first meeting. It was not only for personal loveliness, which was such as the fondest father could wish, but the intellectual graces which her expanded mind exhibited, proved the more than sisterly care with which Matilda had watched over her.

## CHAPTER X.

THE next morning a visitor was announced whose name thrilled our heroine with lively emotion. It was with no common warmth that she welcomed honest Atkins, of whom we have made such frequent and honorable mention. Can it be wondered at that he was gratified with his reception, and that his long yarns were listened to with exemplary patience, as they brought before her, in vivid colours, the plain, unvarnished tale of Edward's sufferings? To Matilda's offers of kindness he returned a steady refusal.



“ Bless your heart, I want nothing. The Admiralty takes care of me. Have they not made a gentleman of me in confirming my appointment to this tight, beautiful craft? She is the admiration of all the dockyard. But, I am thinking, when Mr. Mortimer comes back it would warm my old heart to see you spliced together, that is if I am not afloat, for it is my duty to obey orders, which always answers best in the long run.”

This part of our narrative reminds us of the progress of some grand procession which winds along the crowded streets, amidst the admiration of the gaping multitude. The distinguished personage, for whom this glittering cavalcade is got up, comes on almost at the close of this lengthened pageant. It is thus with our narrative. We have introduced the subordinates on the stage, but the youthful hero himself, on whose behalf we have been wishful to excite the sympathy of our readers, breaks not yet to sight.

But he comes at last. Behold him on the deck of that vessel, eyeing wistfully, at earliest dawn, the shores of England dimly seen through the morning haze. There is a headwind against them, and this is the third day

they have been beating up the channel. A restless impatience, which through all his trials had slumbered within him, was now busy at his heart. A steamer approaches rapidly, and a loud hail swells from her side. Is it his own name that strikes his ear? He springs on board, and is warmly welcomed by the commander, though a stranger to him, and he seems an object of interest to the whole crew. The steamer had been ordered to cruize about the channel to look out for the vessel which might be delayed by contrary winds, and receive Mr. Mortimer on board for his more immediate conveyance on shore. And now he treads on English ground. He is free as air. Everywhere he is greeted with smiles. Yes, his country acknowledges his innocence, and welcomes back to her shores the noble-minded youth, who meekly bowed to her sentence, but with enduring faith, still clung to the never-dying hope that his hour of triumph would arrive at last. It was now arrived. As he sprang on shore, his heart was full, but was it satisfied? Wherever he turned, congratulations met him, Godfrey was there, Manners, Charles, Herbert. He felt he was on the very threshold of happiness. Some hours would yet

intervene, ere he could fold the loved one in his arms, and pour forth all his swelling heart at her feet.

The meeting was over.

We will not attempt to describe it. We could not do it justice, and will gladly leave it to the imagination of our readers. We should fail in the description.

Two or three days elapsed ere Edward found out that the world had other claims upon him, besides those of love. Matilda at last told him with a smile, he was grown selfish.

"Look at those unanswered notes on the table, particularly the one from Lord Herbert. The public have many claims upon you, Edward."

"And I too, upon the public, dear Matilda, for our long separation."

"Be it so, Edward," she cheerfully replied, "but let me infuse a little rational sense into our arrangements. Will not a few morning hours devoted to business, add a richer zest to our evening meetings?"

"You are still my better angel, dearest Matilda; I will do all you wish."

He forthwith accompanied Herbert to his father. Edward was desirous of gaining the good opinion of one, whom Matilda spoke of in such glowing terms, and he was gratified with the almost fatherly interest the noble invalid took in his concerns.

“I feel, Mr. Mortimer,” he said at last, “a new pleasure in existence, since Herbert introduced me to his new friends. I was looking forward to a solitary old age, as I cannot now mingle with the world, and it would be selfish in me to confine my good boys to my arm-chair, but recent events have banished all this gloom, and were I inclined to murmur, one thought of all that dear Miss Godfrey, and yourself, Mr. Mortimer, have suffered, would silence me at once. Here you must make your head quarters, and now go with Herbert and select your own rooms. I presume,” he added, with a smile, “that ere long you will have an establishment of your own.”

Herbert joyfully started up to obey his father, and hesitation on Edward's part was unavailing. This arrangement delighted Matilda, nor was she less gratified with the cards of compliment that almost loaded the table,

when Edwards's arrival was noised abroad. The daily journals circulated the tidings, and Edward now succeeded in his turn to be the object of general curiosity, and to enjoy that flattering distinction which so many covet, but to which few had a juster claim. All ranks, all ages, welcomed him. Those who knew him, pointed him out to those who knew him not. The young hailed him as a brother; the old as a son of whom a father might well be proud, and many a beaming eye was turned to gaze upon him with a "longing, lingering look."

But he, the unconscious object of all this admiration, courted it not, but eagerly looked forward to the calm evening hour, when the world would be shut out, and he should be restored to her presence who was all the world to him. But distinction of a more solid and flattering nature than all this ephemeral popularity awaited him.

He was specially invited to the Colonial Office, where his reception was generous and gratifying. The disastrous reverses he had been exposed to, owing to his erroneous conviction, were discussed in an open and manly

spirit, and he was assured that it was the wish of government to mark their sense of his meritorious services which had proved so eminently beneficial to his country, in any way most congenial with his own views.

“Think more of this, Mr. Mortimer, at your leisure,” said the Secretary; “consult your friend Lord Herbert; and when your plans are more matured, communicate with us again. Before we part, I have pleasure in acquainting you that the young convict in whose welfare Captain Manners and yourself evinced so great an interest (and deservedly on his part) will be restored to his liberty, as orders are gone out to that effect. There are so many mitigating circumstances in his favour, laid before us, that we did not hesitate to annul his sentence. Indeed, his landlord’s son, by whose overstrained evidence he was convicted, in order to screen himself from the vengeance of a brother for seducing his sister, has at length married her, after recovering from a severe illness which would have proved fatal, but for her devoted attention.”

Edward was truly gratified with this unexpected intelligence, and his heart thrilled at



the thought of once more embracing the noble, persecuted boy, the companion of his lonely hours, whom he should ever love as a brother.

Edward's first visit was to Matilda. He told her all. Her look betrayed perplexity.

"Your wishes, dearest Matilda, shall guide mine."

But the cloud passed not away. She thought of the past. What was the world, with all its glittering honours, to hearts that lived only for each other!

"Consult Lord Herbert, dear Edward," she said at length; "methinks, from the mention of his name, he is already aware of the intentions of government. We have already enough, dear Edward—yes, more than enough for happiness."

He read her thoughts, and soon was seated by Lord Herbert's easy chair, who betrayed no surprise at the mention of the official interview and its purport, thus confirming Matilda's supposition.

The subject was confidentially entered upon, in all its bearings; and after some time,

"Well, Mr. Mortimer," said Lord Herbert, "I gather from all you say—and I think I

read your feelings correctly—that you have no thirst for ambition about you, and that you consider you can serve your country, as a faithful and loyal subject, by living upon your own estate and there fulfilling the responsible duties of parent, magistrate and neighbour, and all this with happier effect than by encountering the storms of a political life. Am I right?”

“You have indeed, Lord Herbert, correctly read my thoughts.”

“And I cordially coincide with you, my young friend; nor will Miss Godfrey dissent from our joint conclusion. And more, I am not unwilling to interpret your feelings to government, as my name is not wholly unknown in the official world.”

This offer Edward gratefully accepted, and Matilda's look became brighter when she heard what had passed.

The sweet evening-hour had arrived. They were seated together undisturbed, for though the domestic circle was not diminished in number, its youthful members were scattered in pairs, and Manners, Charles, Herbert, were severally engaged with not unwilling listeners.

“Dearest Matilda,” whispered Edward, at last, “when shall we then commence this happy course of life we have been thus sketching out? I am not insensible to the kindness of my country; but my sweetest reward will be the exclusive possession of this hand which I now hold. When shall we be inseparably united? True love is ever full of fears—dearest, end them at once.”

Before they separated, there was no reserve between them.

“Why should I hesitate, Edward, when I have myself looked forward to this moment as the consummation of my own earthly happiness?”

The glow of triumph was not confined to Edward; there were others in the room, whose suit was attended with similar success.

One couple, however, although in a small recess apart, appeared not to court privacy, as at intervals, the lady’s musical laugh spoke her sense of the entertaining powers of her companion.

It was the happy Ellen, listening to her still happier husband, who sat at her feet, gazing delighted on her face, as if he had now,

for the first time, discovered how fair, how beautiful she was.

On the second day after Edward's conference with Lord Herbert, he was again seated beside his easy chair.

"I have been expecting you, my young friend. I have a communication from government. Read it."

It was to the effect,

"That in consideration of Mr. Mortimer's important services, her Majesty was graciously pleased to confer upon him the dignity of a baronet of the united kingdom, which would be notified accordingly in the ensuing gazette."

Edward looked at his lordship in silence.

"I read your thoughts," remarked Lord Herbert. "Think not of declining the honour. You cannot—you must not. Take the paper, submit it to the Godfreys, and come here again."

"On second thoughts," said Edward, "I think I have no right to refuse it, however un-

willing I may be. Other considerations press upon me."

"Yes, young man, you now talk sensibly."

Edward rose, with a promise of a speedy return.

He placed the letter in Matilda's hand; she read it; and a blush, the cause of which she could scarcely analyze to herself, passed over her cheek. They looked at each other, and Matilda first broke the silence.

"You cannot, Edward, decline its acceptance."

"So thinks Lord Herbert, and though, at first, averse to it, I now agree with him."

The letter was handed round the family circle, and the general satisfaction and approval of Edward's assent, were warmly expressed.

He lost no time in returning to Lord Herbert, who was gratified with his report.

"This matter, my young friend, being finally decided, we must now pass on to another of even more importance. You must appear at the next levée to kiss hands, and Montague, not having been yet presented since his appointment to the guards, must not longer de-

lay it. Now, I mean to rally from my present weakness, and present you both."

Edward scarce knew how to express his thanks.

"I have yet another request in which you must humour me, Mr. Mortimer."

"After all your kindness, Lord Herbert," replied Edward, "your every wish must be a command with me."

"Be it so; I take you at your word. When is your wedding to take place?"

"Not many weeks, I hope, will elapse before that happy event."

"And, according to the phraseology of the 'Post,' where will the happy pair retire to pass the honeymoon?"

"It is not yet arranged," replied Edward.

"I am glad of it, because you will do me a kindness by taking possession of my seat in Northamptonshire during that period. It is just as I left it, ready for your reception at a day's notice; and, I hope, the offer will be accepted as heartily as it is made."

Edward was taken by surprise.

"Indeed, Lord Herbert, you have already laid me under such a load of obligation, it would be ungenerous still to tax your kind-



ness, and presumptuous in me to take advantage of your noble offer. Besides, are there not some changes in prospect in your own family?"

"Indeed, I hope so, Mr. Mortimer; but none that will take place for a few months to come. During that period, I shall not leave London; and if you refuse my proposal, you will derange all my plans, and I shall be compelled to close my country establishment. You see then, I am selfish in my offer. Say not a word against it, till you have consulted the Godfreys."

When Edward entered the morning room, he found Herbert seated there, who had been already apprised by his father of the intended arrangement, the acceptance of which he was warmly urging to Matilda and her mother.

"Do not be too sensitive, Edward," said Herbert, in reply to his renewed objections, "true, it is painful to be under obligation; but here my father considers himself the obliged party."

"Two weddings shortly expected in your family," observed Mrs. Godfrey. "Surely the country seat will be required for these arrangements."

“My father, Mrs. Godfrey, plans his arrangements with the precision of a plummet and rule. Be assured, what he offers may be at once accepted, without any fear of interfering with his comforts. I shall acquaint him,” he added, with a smile, “that his house will be honoured with the occupation of Sir Edward and Lady Mortimer during their honeymoon.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON the following day, Edward was, as usual, seated with his noble friend, to whom he became daily more attached, in familiar converse, when the servant entering, delivered him a note. It was from Matilda, announcing the arrival of a stranger, who was desirous of an immediate interview with him, and would wait for that purpose.

He handed it to Lord Herbert.

“Obey the summons, Edward, and stand not on ceremony.”

He hastened to the fair writer. She was alone, in deep thought.

"Matilda, a stranger, say you? did he give his card?"

"No, Edward. I was not aware that any one was admitted into the room below, when I casually entered it. An elderly gentleman was seated there, dressed in black, and with white, venerable hair. He rose at my entrance.

"'Are you Miss Godfrey?' he said; and his voice trembled.

"I bent in reply. He looked earnestly at me; and his emotion seemed to check his farther utterance,\* for his lip quivered, and I noticed tears on his cheek. At length, he said,

"'I would see Mr. Mortimer.'

"I told him you were with Lord Herbert, but that I would immediately send for you, and left the room. Edward, who can he be? I feel unaccountably interested."

"I will see him, dear Matilda. A few minutes will explain all."

When Edward entered the room, the stranger was leaning against the mantel-piece his face partly covered with his hand. His agitation was evident, as he approached Edward.

"Do I address Edward Mortimer?"

"Such is my name," replied Edward.

"I then, at length, stand in the presence of one, who, for many long months, has never been out of my thoughts. We have met before."

Edward looked surprised.

"Well may you lose all recollection of me. Sorrow cuts deep. My hair is white, my frame is tottering, and a premature old age comes over me." Edward's heart thrilled with pity.

"Dear sir," he said, your language is mysterious, yet methinks your features remind me of one of my earliest friends. Be seated, and you shall find in me a patient listener."

"Hear me, then, Mr. Mortimer, and I must be brief, or my strength may fail me. I was born in the West Indies. At an early age I married. I loved my wife deeply. We had a son, our only child. As he grew up, he was all his parents could wish. Though it was painful to part with him, we considered it for his advantage that he should finish his education in England, in order the better to prepare him for that important part in the drama of life, to which my large wealth entitled him. The favourable accounts we received from his

preceptors, were a cordial to the hearts of his parents, and after a long absence, we were joyfully preparing to quit Jamaica, and join our beloved boy in England, previous to a projected tour through Europe, when we were stunned with the dreadful news that our child, our only child, had been barbarously murdered—murdered by his friend—his bosom friend—who accompanied him from Jamaica to England on the same errand—was trained under the same masters, and together they had grown to manhood. This treacherous friend, rumour said, had familiarized him with all the haunts of vice in London, and it was on his return from a gambling den, that the poor deceived youth was waylaid, robbed, and murdered. This awful news was a thunderbolt to us both. All our earthly hopes were withered, and the voice of comfort was a mockery. Day succeeded day, and still we seemed stupified, till dire necessity compelled me to struggle with my feelings. The blow was too much for my wife, her heart was breaking. I scarcely quitted her bed-side. In three months she was dead.”

The mystery was solved, yet Edward spoke not. He shuddered at the dread recital,



and sat like marble, intently gazing on the agonized father.

“ I was now alone in the world, yet I was unconscious of it. For many long months, I knew not what was passing around me. In my delirium, I rained curses on the head of the murderer, and called on God to pursue him with his direct vengeance. At length my reason returned, but only to make me sensible of my wretchedness, and it was long before I partially recovered my strength. It was now that I first understood that this treacherous friend, had been tried for the murder, was convicted, and sentenced to transportation for life. This seemed to proclaim the public sympathy for me, but could it console me for the loss of all I held dear? Everything around me, appeared to feed my grief, and I at length determined to visit England, impressed with the idea that I should derive comfort from weeping over my child's grave. Previous to my leaving the island, the English journals revived the mention of my son's murder. The strange, the unexpected version of the circumstances connected with it, astonished me. It was almost incredible; other accounts came,

confirming the injustice of the sentence upon Edward Mortimer, and painting in glowing colours, the unshaken attachment of his intended bride, who had not only discovered, but with devoted perseverance, had pursued even to his lonely fastnesses among the Apennines, the real murderer, who from her hand, there, received his death-blow. Succeeding journals seemed to rival each other in proclaiming to the world the romantic heroism of the lovely girl, in establishing the innocence of the injured youth which was now universally acknowledged, and the valuable services which Mr. Mortimer rendered to his country, during his outward voyage, even while its injustice weighed heavy at his heart. When I landed in England, every tongue was busy in their praise, and how did my own bosom bleed with remorse at the vindictive spirit I displayed against this noble youth, whom I had cursed as the murderer, but whose generous faithful heart would have saved my unhappy son, but heaven willed it otherwise. How shall I make amends? My injustice lies heavy on my conscience, and even as I knelt on my child's grave, I thought his voice breathed your name. Oh, Mr. Mortimer what have you not suffered for your kind

anxious attempt to aid my son? You thought not of yourself as you bent over the body to try to save him, and how have you been rewarded? Sentenced as a robber, and murderer, covered with shame and ignominy, and torn from all you loved, to linger out your wretched life among the vile outcasts of society in a distant land. And all this you have suffered for me and mine. The general voice welcomes your return, rewards and honours await you, but what has the father done? Night and day, methinks my son's voice reminds me of my ingratitude. It seems to say,

“Take Edward to your arms, my father, he will be to you a son, he will supply my place, and his love will bless your lonely age.”

Edward wept like a child, never were his feelings so severely taxed. Some minutes elapsed before he could reply intelligibly to the heart breathed appeal, ‘will you be to me a son?’

“Mr. Dormer,” at length he said, “your trials have been indeed great, such as a father, a husband, can alone feel the bitterness of. Believe me sincere when I say, that if there are any soothing services in my power, which

may tend to soften your double bereavement, I will cheerfully render them. I loved your son, heaven knows how truly. That love, which he no longer needs, I transfer to you. I will be to you a son, and you shall be to me a father."

"May heaven ratify the blessed union, my dear son," cried the transported father, as he pressed Edward in his arms, and fondly kissed his cheek.

"I now feel as if I had still a link with existence. I have now some one to love, who will love me in return."

The conversation flowed in a calmer strain, and every moment increased in interest. Edward made him acquainted with his situation, and found an eager listener.

"You have then, Edward, accepted Lord Herbert's kind offer of your temporary possession of his country seat after your marriage. It is an arrangement we must all approve. But with respect to a permanent residence?"

"We intend purchasing an estate, but have not yet decided upon one. Mr. Godfrey is looking out."

"From what fund, Edward?"

"From Miss Godfrey's large property which

she inherited from her uncle, which is wholly vested in the English funds."

"Therefore, taking into consideration," observed Mr. Dormer, "her father's wealth, Miss Godfrey will prove a wealthy bride, Edward."

"And might have matched with the proudest in the land. When you know her as I do, my dear sir, you will then confess, with me, that her worldly wealth is among the least of her attractions."

"I doubt it not, my dear boy. I am already prepared to love her. But your own expectations may equal, or probably exceed the brilliant fortune your wife will bring you. A life of long and successful industry has enabled me to accumulate wealth, beyond my most sanguine dreams. You must not be my adopted son in name only. There is none to inherit it but yourself."

Edward started.

"Are there no distant relatives, no friends, whose jealous disappointment might rouse unpleasant feelings when your sudden determination is known?"

"Calm your fears, Edward. I have no relative, save a distant one whom I have amply

provided for. My few attached friends will not be forgotten. Indeed, there is no change in the disposition of my property, except in substituting your name for that of my lost child. It is not only a bare act of justice on my part, but in carrying it into effect, my heart swells with a rush of happiness which I never again expected to feel in this world. No more scruples, Edward, no thanks—for I read your eloquent countenance. Be it ours to purchase this estate. When you have made me acquainted with all this worthy family, to which I eagerly look forward, we will lose no time in completing the arrangement. And, my dear boy, for the present at least, we must live together. I wait your approval of a residence in the vicinity of London, which has been offered to me through the medium of my agent and my decision is expected during the week.”

After some farther confidential talk, Mr. Dormer rose; but how different his appearance! His agitation had wholly passed away; his step was firm, and a calm satisfaction was spread over his features.

“And now, dear boy,” he said, as his hand was clasped in Edward’s, “though I am anxious to



be introduced to this family, on second thoughts I had better defer it till to-morrow, for both our sakes. In the meantime, you may have full leisure to tell them all that has passed between us. Tell it also to Lord Herbert, as I may chance have to rob him of his young companion. I could scarcely bear its repetition. I would look forward to future happiness, and not dwell too much on the past. To-morrow then, Edward."

"To-morrow, my dear sir!" replied Edward. "Cannot the introduction take place this evening?"

After a pause,

"Well, be it so," said Mr. Dormer, with a smile.

The hour was then fixed when Edward would call for him at his hotel, and after a warm embrace, they parted.

Edward still lingered in the room, wholly absorbed by the past. It seemed a dream, too wonderful for reality. The interview was one unalloyed picture of mutual gratification. Mr. Dormer was evidently comforted, he seemed relieved from a heavy burthen, which bowed him to the earth, and could he himself dwell without delight upon its momentous result

which was so unexpectedly advantageous to himself?

He was leaving the room when Matilda entered.

"The stranger is gone, Edward, and you are yet lingering here. Has the meeting been unpleasant?"

"No, dear Matilda, it has been full of wonder and joy. Sit down and listen."

Matilda was not prepared for the surprising revelation which, during its recital, elicited from her exclamations of pity, amazement and delight.

Time flew unheeded as they discussed its various features, not aware that Emily stood behind them, having entered the room unobserved, uneasy at their long absence. At the first glance her heart was relieved.

"Could not you wait till evening," she said, with a smile; "the morning hours are too precious to be trifled away."

"Come with me, dear Emily," replied Matilda; "and before you all, I will tell you a tale of wonder. Edward must hasten to Lord Herbert."

And it was soon the subject of general discourse, involving matter of such important

consequences that they were almost bewildered with contemplating them. Every heart melted with compassion for the trials of the bereaved father. Yes, they would all strive to alleviate his sorrows, and his expected presence in the evening was eagerly looked for.

Evening came, and with it Mr. Dormer at the side of his adopted son.

There was no unnecessary allusion to his domestic grief, no expression of pity; but the stranger saw with a glance, that his history was universally known, as in the ready attention he received from all, the kindness was so mingled with feeling, that he was soon satisfied he was among friends. He would have been more surprised at the display of beauty before him, in all its natural grace, but Edward had already sketched not only the female inmates, but the noble-looking youths that now eagerly met his extended hand.

Intimacy was soon established where there was no restraint. Arrangements succeeded each other rapidly, in accordance with Mr. Dormer's liberal heart, and when the young people gradually dissolved into pairs, the elders brought them to a definitive conclusion, when it was finally settled that Edward was to be with Mr. Dormer at an early hour on the

morrow, to inspect the proposed town residence, and accompany him afterwards to Godfrey's offices.

When all were pleased, there was no check to the advancement of business. Why should we dwell on the minutiae?

The house was bought—the settlements prepared—the presentation took place, and Sir Edward Mortimer received the congratulations of his friends.

Lord Herbert was grown young again. He interfered with everything delighting and delighted, and a large establishment in his own county, which was unexpectedly on sale, was pointed out by him to Sir Edward.

“You will have plenty of spare time,” he observed, with a good-humoured smile, “during your honeymoon, and I would earnestly recommend you to go over and survey it. It is only a few miles distant.”

## CHAPTER XII.

THE wedding morn broke bright and beautiful, that long expected day, when Sir Edward was to receive the final consummation of all his hopes and wishes.

Had we the pen of Richardson, we would make special detail of the previous preparations for this happy event, of the loveliness of the bride and her attendant maids, the display of dress, equipage, and all the joyous ceremonies connected with this interesting festival.

And as they stood at the altar, never did faithful bosoms heave with a purer rush of happiness than those of Sir Edward and his lovely bride, when they responded to the call of the minister, and solemnly pledged their vows to each other. Their hearts had been united long before.

We have ourselves fondly lingered over these pages in which we have detailed this our history of domestic trials, which are of rare occurrence in the female world.

We cannot, however, but think they will excite in our fair readers a more than common interest for a suffering sister, whose noble bearing, under misfortune, has added another to the already numerous bright examples that dignify the female character.

We have pourtrayed them simply without any affectation of style or sentiment, trusting to that unadorned language, whose source is the heart. We have not sought to dazzle, and it may be, to bewilder our readers with high-sounding phrases, and artificial choice of expression.

We would rather win one tear from the eye of beauty, and deem it a greater triumph than



the applause resulting from laboured and neatly turned periods which, though united with cold elegance of diction, boast no communion with the best feelings of the heart.

THE END.







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